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# **POLITICS AND RELIGION**

**(A Study of Historical Interaction Between  
Socio-political Relationships in a Mysore Village)**





# **POLITICS & RELIGION**

**(A Study of Historical Interaction between Socio-political  
Relationships in a Mysore Village)**

**C. Parvathamma**

**— M.A. PH.D.**

*Foreword*

**Prof. I. Karve**



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(A Study of Historical Interaction between Socio-  
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## FOREWORD

Dr. Parvathamma's book "Politics and Religion—A Study of Historical Interaction between Socio-political Relationships in a Mysore Village" makes very interesting reading. She wants to show that an Indian village was never an independent unit, an isolated community as Metcalf and other early Indianists had described it. On the contrary it was very much a part of a larger religious and social structure which have to be taken into consideration, if one wants to understand what goes on in a village. I think she has amply and ably proved her point and I also think that the early officials and ethnologists would also have heartily endorsed her. The first administrators were struck by a certain aspect of village life which they emphasised ; modern anthropologists have brought out the aspect of interdependence. A village has always been both : some villages were more independent and isolated than others in certain aspects. The village, Parvathamma has studied, presents a type of identity and isolation not known to any of the northern villages. She herself points out that 60% of all the marriages of the majority community, the Veerasaiva Panchacharas are within the village. This is amazing self-sufficiency.

Also in olden times communications were not as easy as they are today. The number of people visiting religious centres has steadily grown since the state governments give all kinds of help to pilgrims to visit such centres. In spite of this new mobility the latest migration figures in the 1961 census show that nearly 80% of all people in India remain in the village in which they are born. So the whole question of village independence and isolation is relative and either type of picture can be presented depending on which side of life is emphasised.

Dr. Parvathamma rightly stresses that the social, religious and political life of a village is involved with what goes on in a region. I would go further and say that what goes on in a semi-continent like India, at a particular historical time has pertinence for each village. The caste rivalries that come into play through politics and religion is a feature of present day India and each village is an individualised act of this drama, made unique and interesting through certain features and combination of features of that village.

The overall picture of Brahmin and Veerasaiva practices is good but some details do not seem to be well understood. The 'Lingadharana' as soon after birth as possible is given as an example of lack of pollution. I think in this act the emphasis is on the initia-

tion of an individual as soon after birth as possible, and is the more important point as in the case of baptism. Death without such an initiation is held to be a catastrophe. The point about flexibility in ideas of pollution is quite an independent point.

Ideas about pollution are not only Brahmanical but very old and world-wide and seem to belong to all the primitive tribes of the world. Non-pollution is on the other hand a more recent idea. It can almost be viewed as a new type of 'Sanskritisation' if this word is given the general meaning of 'imitation of those felt to be superior.' In this case the idea of non-pollution may be taken from the Jains or/and Muslims. Muslims were the new rulers and Jains were a very powerful sect in medieval Karnatak.

Again the rivalry between the Veerasaivas and Kshatriyas seem to be going definitely in favour of the Veerasaivas. The Kshatriyas do not have their own houses in the village and have all gone to live within the temple compound, are afraid to go in a procession through the village street, and cannot celebrate the function on behalf of the village deity which has to be brought from across the river. They have to send their wives to their natal houses. They do not seem to be very educated, and do not seem to have any livelihood except tilling the temple lands. The Veerasaivas seem to have won on all fronts except the last election. They possess land, are taking to education, are the majority community and have also support in the surrounding area and in the state ministry. They seem to be poised for a total victory and can give the *coup-de-gras* to the Kshatriyas in the near future. But Dr. Parvathamma's analysis does not anticipate this end which seems surprising.

The temple round which all the disputes have been fought again presents a very wide spread cultural feature. Mallari Martand is also called Khandoba in Maharashtra and the cry at his worship is also 'yel kot'. He is a deity represented as a man sitting on horse-back with sword in hand. He is supposed to have killed Mani-malla. He is the family deity of many Maratha clans, Brahmin families and Kayastha families and of Dhangars (shepherds). He is supposed to be among the followers of Shiva like Bhairava Vetala etc.

It is an extremely interesting book especially to a person from a neighbouring linguistic region as it suggested and brought to notice so many parallelisms and contrasts between the two regions.

I. KARVE

## PREFACE

This study concerns the historical interaction between socio-political relationships in a Mysore village. Kshetra, the village studied here presents a good deal of similarity as well as differences in comparison with other South Indian villages. The village could, however, be better understood by placing it in the regional context. The village life is a reflection of the wider area.

The physical appearance of the village, its social structure, and its administrative set-up all show a great degree of similarity with other villages on the Deccan Plateau. The isolable characteristic is the caste composition, especially the numerically dominant Lingayat caste-group which is anti-Brahmanical, and anti-Sanskritic but claims equal status with the twice-born. Economically on the whole, Lingayats are well off though politically weak. A number of smaller and lower castes are naturally influenced by the Lingayat preponderance.

Veerasaivism arose in Karnataka as a reformist movement and Basava the exponent of its philosophy and theological tenets was a Brahmin by birth. But he rebelled against the rigidities of the Brahmanical caste system and other Vedic rites and rituals. The movement spread rapidly in the Deccan region, although the largest concentration of Veerasaivas today is in Mysore state itself. The more orthodox among the Veerasaivas do not consider Basava as the founder of Veerasaivism but claim that Veerasaivism is as ancient and widespread as the Brahmanical religion itself. This is borne out in a myth. I do not venture to establish the antiquity or otherwise of Veerasaivism. Here I am more concerned with the sociological significance.

Veerasaivism rebelled against the Brahmanical caste system, but today it contains within itself a number of sub-castes which are endogamous and follow different occupations. The axis of cleavage between the twice-born and the Veerasaivas however, is with regard to notions of ritual purity and pollution. While ritual purity and pollution is central to Brahmanical Hinduism, Veerasaivism assumes the purity of mankind.



The socio-political relationships within Kshetra thus could be seen in the first instance as a struggle between the traditional values as represented by Brahmanical Hinduism and newly emergent values as implied by Veerasaivism.

This line of argument however does not constitute the theme of the book. There are other aspects which are important. The preponderance of Lingayats in Kshetra and their anti-Brahmanism is in tune with the area under consideration. The local situation is largely a reflection of the wider area. Veerasaivism as a new socio-religious force was felt at different levels and places in the course of its spread.

But there are also local situations which aggravate the tension and lead to conflict between caste groups. Locally a Kshatriya joint family controls a large Saivite temple which is the regional cult centre. The Kshetra Linga temple possesses six hundred odd acres of very fertile black cotton soil which is controlled by the Kshatriyas. In addition substantial donations are made by the pilgrims. The temple land has caused great shortage of available cultivable land in the village. The Veerasaivas who constitute a major agricultural group naturally resent the presence of the temple, particularly the inalienable nature of its lands.

The temple economy has affected the inter-caste political relationships for a long time. The Veerasaivas of Kshetra in collaboration with Veerasaivas in the neighbourhood advanced their claims to temple ownership, and claimed that the temple deity, Shiva, was worshipped exclusively by Lingayats. In this way the Lingayats re-emphasized the religious differences between themselves and traditional Hinduism as represented by the Kshatriyas.

Much of the local life was and is influenced by what happens at different levels. This was and is so in pre-British, British and post-Independence India. The social, economic, political, and religious life of the village was very much a part of the region. In this sense Kshetra has always been a meeting place for the interaction between local and regional forces. Veerasaivism spread into the former Madras area from the Bombay Karnatak region mainly by recruiting people of other castes, including lower castes. The Kshatriyas of Kshetra also at one time came here from outside, from a distant place in Alur Taluk which is now in (Andhra Pradesh), and claim descent from the now-extinct Vijayanagar royal family which ruled over Karnataka from 1336-1565.

The founding of the village and the temple has assumed a mythical character because of the prolonged claims and counter claims advanced by the Kshatriyas and Veerasaivas. The legal status of the Kshatriya ownership of the temple was stabilised in British India and is continued. Yet it has led to increased tension, competition and non-cooperation in the village between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats.

With the formation of the 'new' Mysore state when the Kannada speaking areas merged with the 'old' Mysore state in 1956, the Veerasaivas have emerged as the numerically and politically dominant caste at the state level. Yet locally, in Kshetra, the democratic village Panchayat Board is dominated by the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas' economic and numerical strength cannot be matched against the Veerasaivas, for the former constitute a 'negligible minority' and have no property worth the name in the village. But politically the Kshatriyas remain powerful to the extent that a senior member of the Kshatriya family has been the Panchayat Board President for nearly two decades.

With the coming of the Panchayat system of village administration the Lingayats have shifted their attention from the temple and its economy to the Panchayat and want to dominate the village politically, political control being the ultimate symbol of authority in the village. With this change in Lingayat strategy the role of the temple has acquired a new dimension, in that the temple overtly affects the political behaviour of the people in the village. The religious susceptibilities of the people, and the rituals and economic implications are playing very important roles so as to sustain the Kshatriya dominance in the village.

With the increasing number of Lingayat youths getting higher education, and the increasing political awareness and the advantages of belonging to a 'dominant' caste fanned by favourable the external wind, it is possible to bring about a change in leadership. Since part of the Kshatriya success in the village is due to Lingayat support, leadership can be passed on smoothly into the hands of pro-Kshatriya Lingayats. This has already come about during the 1968 village Panchayat elections. The fact that Lingayat sub-castes are riven with internal differences and that they have never united even for a common cause, suggests that unity among Lingayats is a bygone thing. And there will possibly emerge powerful factions among them as has been evident till now with pro and anti-Kshatriya Lingayat

sub-castes and households. The weaknesses of the Lingayats are the strong points of the Kshatriyas and vice-versa. The Kshatriyas who are lacking many 'essential factors' can no longer force their leadership. The best way out is to keep leadership within their circle perhaps amenable to them at some future date, should a Kshatriya member develop liking for politics. This can still happen so long as the temple is controlled by the Kshatriyas. Politics and religion can fuse together or bring about a fission. The known history of Kshetra highlights these two aspects very well. The village could never function as an isolated republic but rather as a replica of larger areas and forces.

C. PARVATHAMMA



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The field work was supported by the award of Damodar Das Scholarship by the Government of Mysore. I record my deep debt of gratitude to the Government of Mysore and in particular to the then Chief Minister, Sri B. D. Jatti, whose timely action helped in expediting the already belated payment of the scholarship amount.

The award of a Research Studentship by the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies, University of Manchester, made it possible for me to analyse my data presented in the body of this book. I thank the authorities of the University for their help which enabled me to go back to England from the field.

Field experience could be thrilling or extremely trying. My fears about field experience soon became unfounded, because of the readiness of the people of Kshetra to consider me as one among them. They gave me unflinching support in my work and supplied information. Their unbounded patience during discussions and enquiries, their vivid descriptions enriched my data. Detailed enquiries among the villagers earned me the reputation of having enumerated roadside trees between Kshetra and Bellary town, the District Headquarters. My field work was made more light and enjoyable by such friendly gestures which has some grandeur about it. Their affection and many kindnesses are unforgettable. I thank the people of Kshetra who helped me to get into the roots of the Villagers' way of living and win their abiding friendship.

I thank the trustee of the Kshetra Linga temple for the interest he showed in my work and the care and attention I received from the members of his family.

The village children soon started identifying me as Rest House Parvathamma; I thank the Village Panchayat Board President, who generously allowed me to live in the Rest House and also gave me details of *Panchayat* working.

While in the field as well as while writing up my material in the Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology I have been guided and stimulated by my supervisor Dr. V.W. Turner, now Professor of Anthropology, Chicago University, Chicago. Dr. R. L.

Rooksby and Prof. M.N. Srinivas have read the manuscript, made suggestions and given me the benefit of their incisive criticisms. I am also benefited by the suggestions made by Professors H.M. Gluckman, F.G. Bailey and in general by the members of the Manchester Department. I heartily thank all of them for their valuable suggestions and acts of kindness.

Since Professor I. Karve wrote her foreword, she did not live to see the book in print. Her passing away has removed not only a devoted academician but the encouraging teacher who guided generations of students. I personally feel the loss, although my association with her was just for a very short period. I record the delightful moments I spent with her. I pay my homage to the departed soul, a distinguished woman, essentially human and I dedicate the book in her name.

I thank Shri O. P. Ghai and Shri S. K. Ghai for the interest they took in publishing the book in record time.

Lastly, I thank all my English and Indian friends who have helped me in many ways in this connection. I am indebted to the Lingayats and Kshatriya youths of Kshetra, who in the teeth of opposition between themselves infused in me a hope of their ability for amicable living despite many differences.

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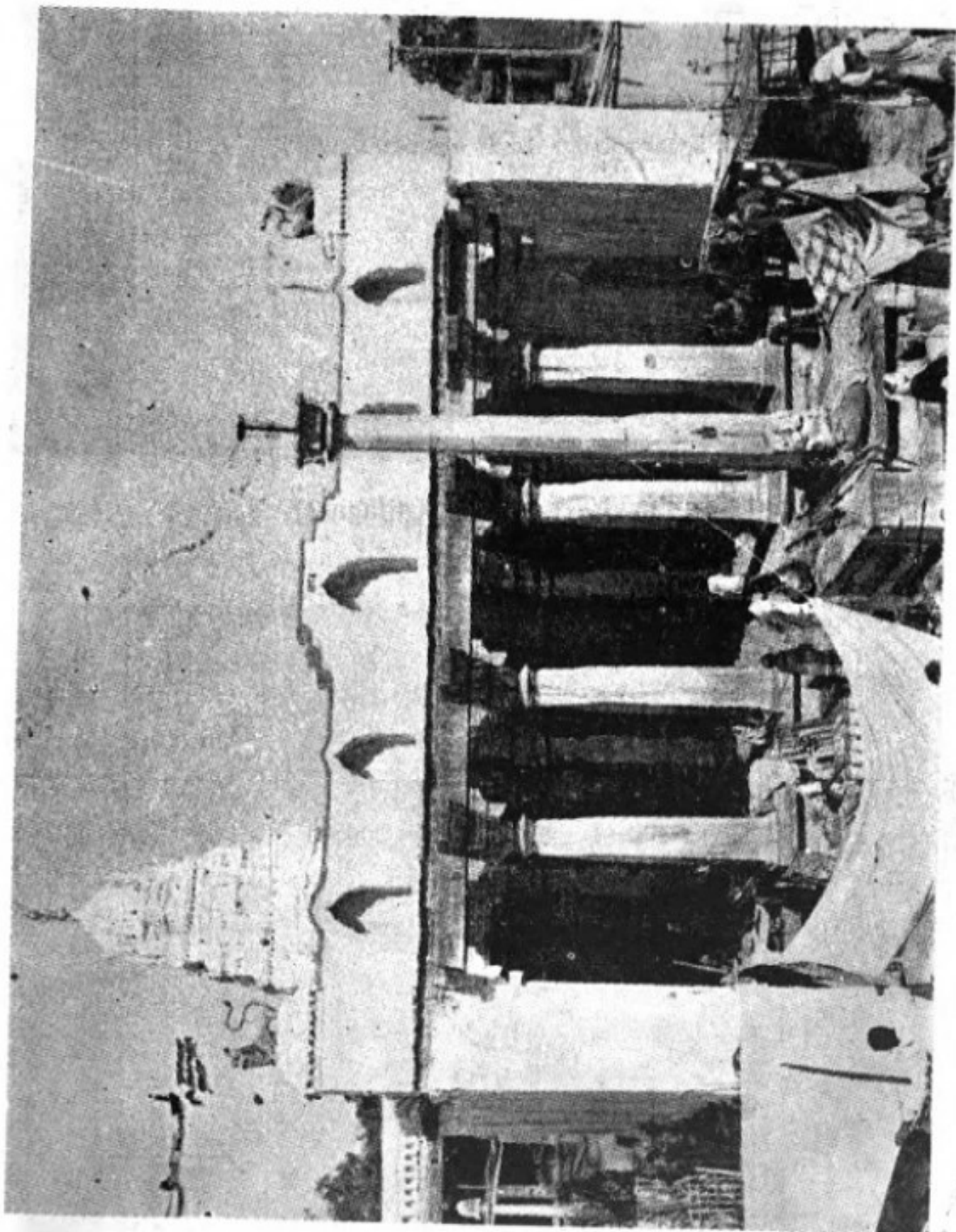


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11. Pilgrims put ceremonial food into the *Gorava* bowl. In the upper left, bearers of a whip are dancing to a slow rhythm before the shrine of the Goddess. At the far end is the house of the Trustee.

## LIST OF MAPS

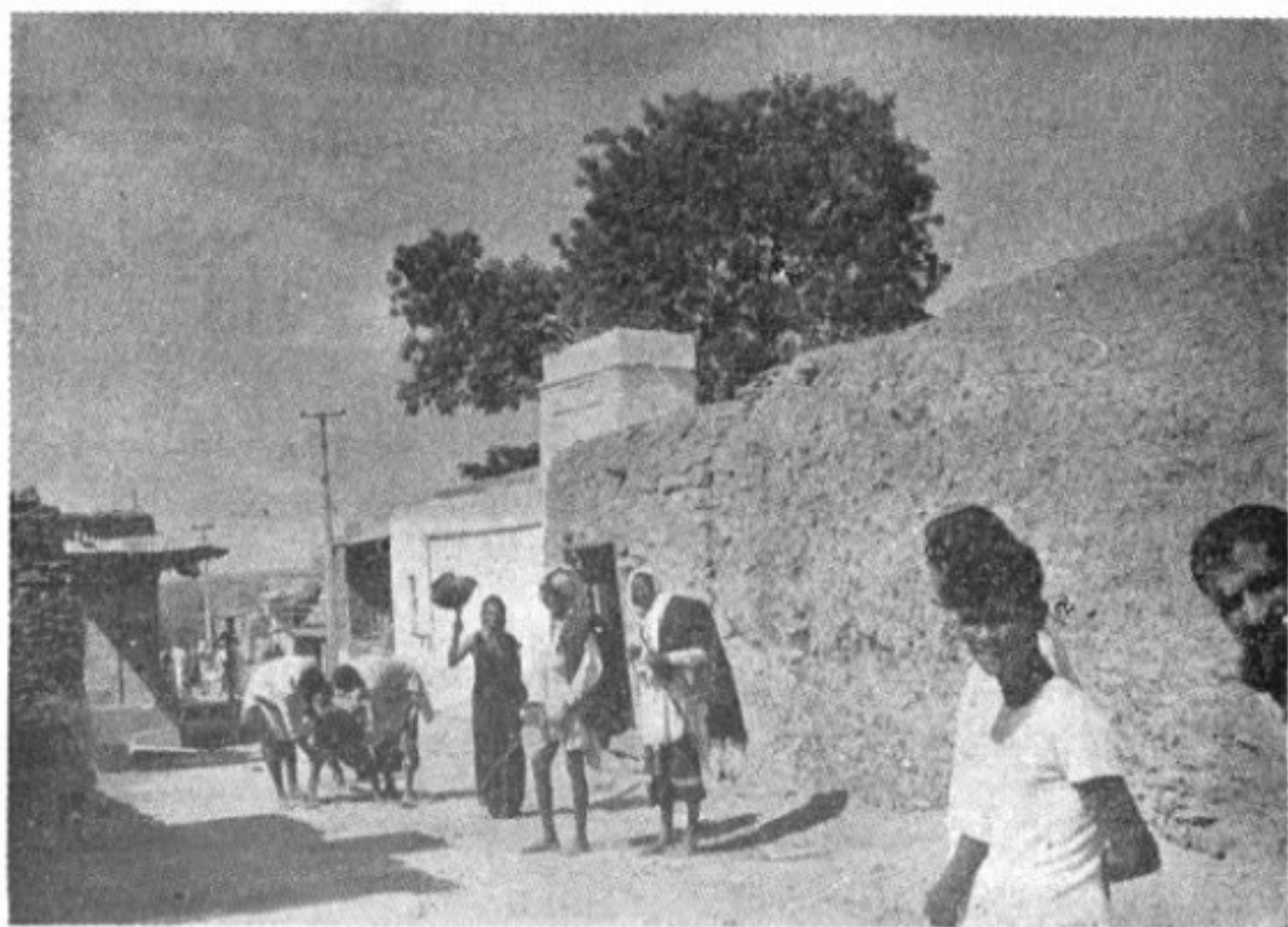
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1. The Kshetra Linga Temple

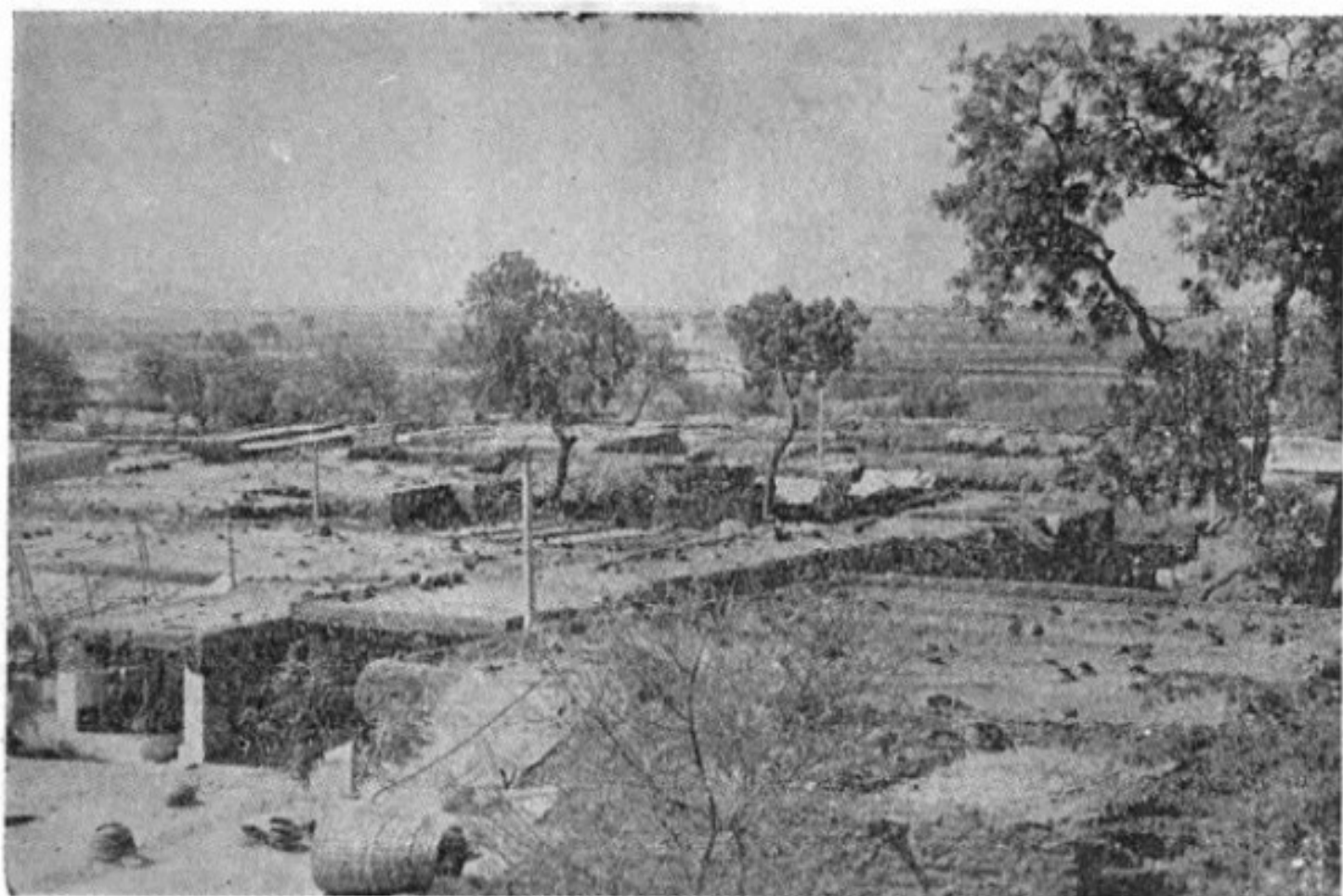


2. The East Gate (Kallagase)



3. South Gate (Mannagase). See the door of dilapidated Hanuman temple on the right side. Some Kshatriya youths on the extreme right, while a man is 'crawling', note the woman with the 'fan'.





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6. A Jangam and his Lingayat  
disciple in a ceremonial Act.



7. The Trustee of Kshetra Linga Temple





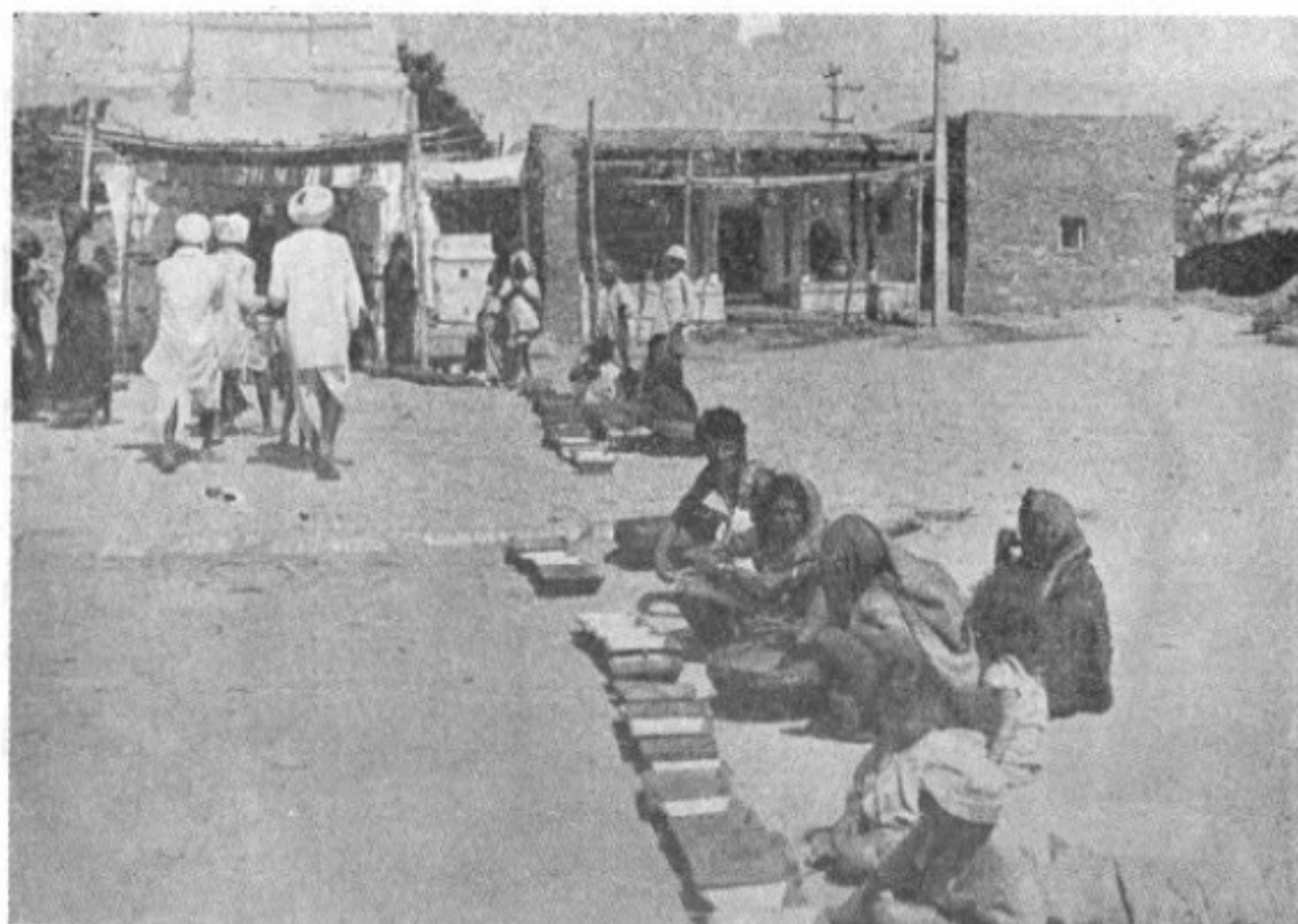
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9. The Kanchaveera youth is waving his hand before the deity (Hasta Arati Belaguvudu). Note his ritual robes.

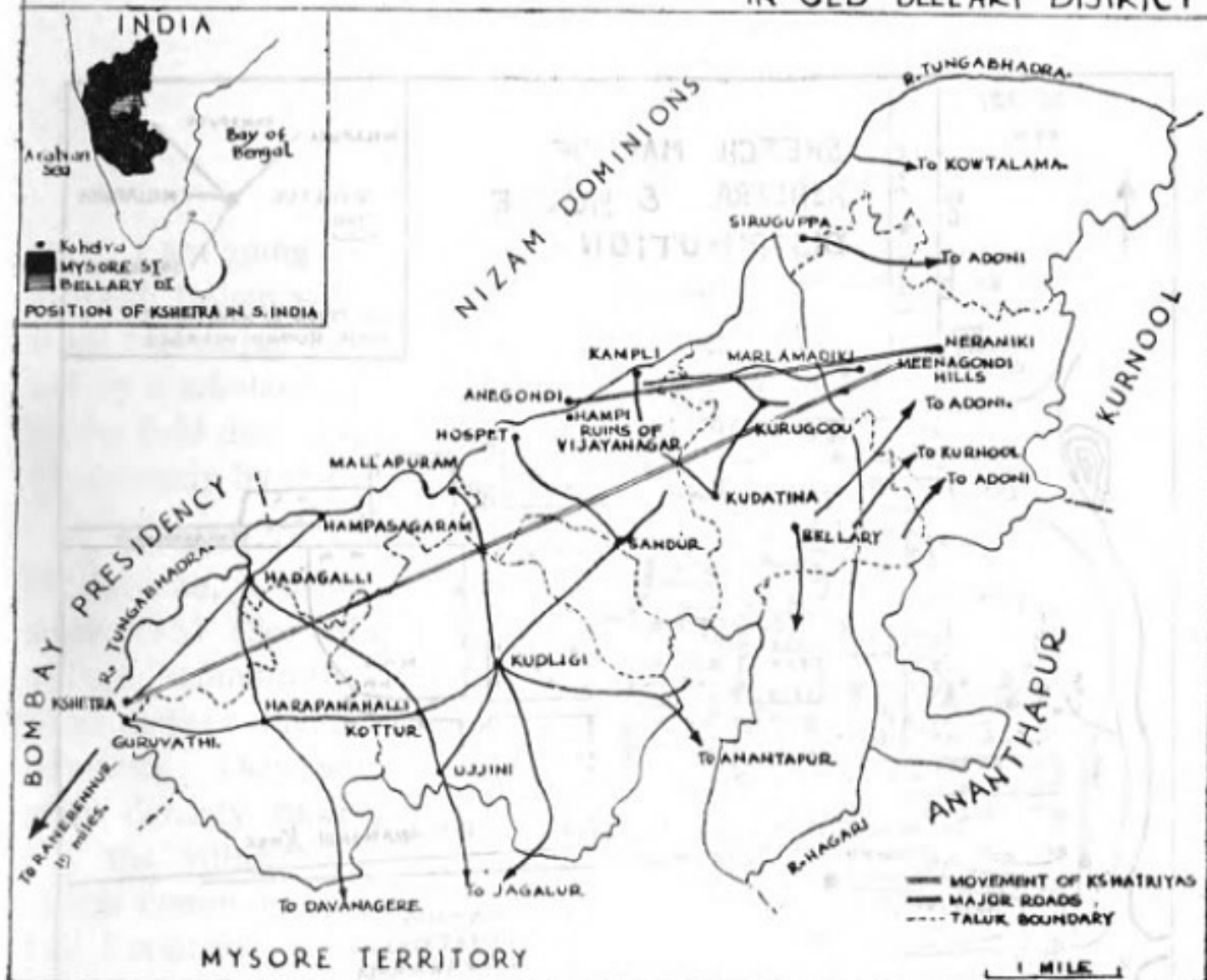


10. A Kshatriya must carry the 'sword' when the deity is taken in a procession. Sitting on the floor is a torchbearer with his torch.



11. Pilgrims put ceremonial food in to the *Gorava* bowl. In the upper left bearers of whip are dancing to a slow rhythm before the shrine of the goddess. At the far end is the house of the trustee.

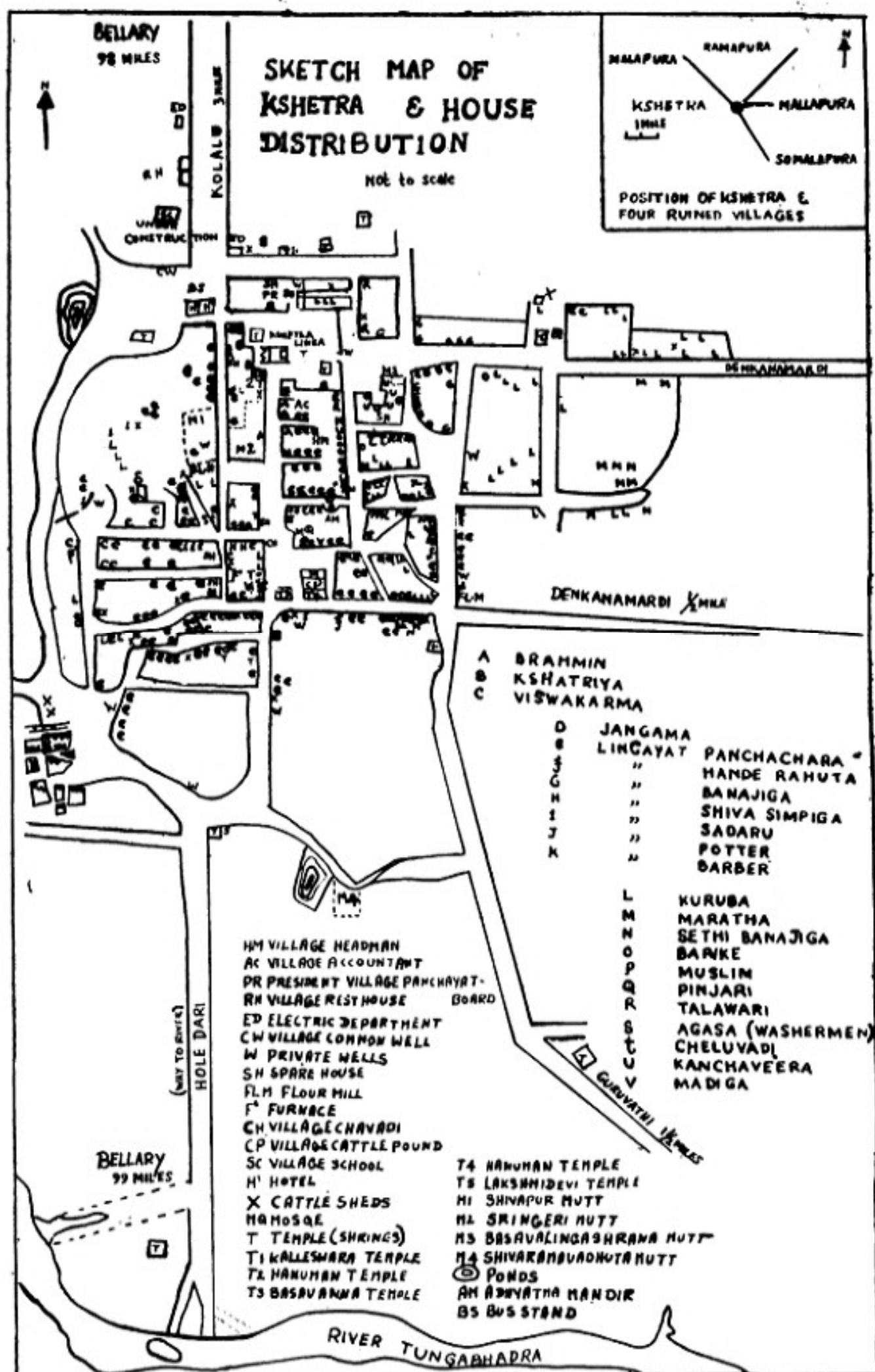
POSITION OF KSHETRA VILLAGE AND COMMUNICATIONS  
IN OLD BELLARY DISTRICT



KSHETRA AND ITS ENVIRONS IN SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF  
HADAGALLI TALUK.







## INTRODUCTION

I am going to describe the political and ritual organization of a South Indian village herein called Kshetra.<sup>1</sup> I lived in the village from November 1959 to October 1960, and the fieldwork was supported by a scholarship from the Government of Mysore. The analysis of the field-data was made possible by the award of a Research Studentship by the University of Manchester.

Kshetra lies near the centre of the Kannada-speaking area of the Deccan, in Bellary District, and has formed part of Mysore State since 1953 (See Map). In 1832 Sir Charles Metcalfe wrote, "the village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution....., but the village community remains the same..... This union of village communities, each one forming a separate little State in itself, has, I conceive, contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India, through all the revolutions and changes which they have suffered, and is in a high degree conducive to their happiness, and to the enjoyment of a great portion of freedom and independence."<sup>2</sup>

The above view of Metcalfe is wrong with reference to the area under consideration. Until the 18th century, political organization in the Deccan exhibited marked instability in its upper levels. Nor were the villages of the Deccan 'isolated republics', immune to social change or the impact of external political, economic and religious forces. It is possible to demonstrate that such was not the case at least for the last seven or eight centuries. The interplay of political and religious forces in Kshetra are intimately connected with sources outside the village. Historically it dates back to several centuries in pre-British India. Under the British and in post-Independence India, the impact of external factors has continued. The interaction between socio-political relationships in Kshetra could be understood better by reference to the role of greater political powers.

1. The name of some places and all the characters used in this book are fictitious.
2. Srinivas, M.N. 1960, '*A Mysore Village*' in *India's Villages* p. 23.



The region in which Kshetra lies is a predominantly Lingayat area, and Lingayats (also called Veerasaivas) form about half of the population of the village. They form a ritually independent group contending for supremacy with the twice-born castes in general and Kshatriyas in particular. The religious dichotomy between the Veerasaivas and the twice-born has affected inter-caste relationships in several ways. Also individual Lingayats and groups have exploited this religious cleavage against members of their own community in order to further their self-interest.

The Veerasaiva or the Lingayat movement arose in the Kannada-speaking area in the twelfth century, initially as a protest against Brahmanical rigidity and ritualism. It was a heterodox anti-Brahmanical sectarian movement.<sup>1</sup>

In the Brahmanical caste system, the ritual status of castes and individuals within the caste depends upon a variety of criteria. One of the most important criteria consists of the maintenance of 'ritual purity' as opposed to 'ritual pollution'.<sup>2</sup> The 'pure and impure'<sup>3</sup> status of individuals is rigidly defined. Life crises, such as birth and death, are considered polluting, and hence the need for purification.

The core of Veerasaiva teachings is its refusal to recognize the concept of ritual pollution, basic to Brahmanical Hinduism. Veerasaivism proclaimed the non-observance of five kinds of pollution.<sup>4</sup>

The rank of a caste in the hierarchy is based on its ritual status. This principle is observed by the Veerasaivas among themselves as well as with reference to other castes. Thus the non-observance of caste distinctions based on ritual status is retained only in theory by Veerasaivas. In practice, however, Veerasaivas recog-

1. Thurston, E. 1909 *Castes and Tribes of South India*, 237. Also see *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1768, Vol. 14, p. 162.
2. A) Srinivas, 1952. *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, p. 30.  
B) Stevenson, H.N.V. 'Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System' *J.R.A.I.* 1954, Vol. 84, pp. 45-65.
3. Dumont, L. and Pocock, D. Ed. 'Pure and Impure' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, July 1959, No. 3, pp. 9-39. (Especially for a critical review of select passages from 2 A & B above).
4. Artal, R.C. 1909, No. 3, pp. 171-262. 'A Short History of the Reformed Shaiva or Veerasaiva Faith' in the *Journal of Anthropological Society*, Bombay.
 

(a) <i>Jati Sutaka</i>	—	Caste Pollution
(b) <i>Janana Sutaka</i>	—	Birth „
(c) <i>Preta Sutaka</i>	—	Death „
(d) <i>Uchchista Sutaka</i>	—	Spittle „
(e) <i>Rajasa Sutaka</i>	—	Menstruation „

nize caste distinctions even among themselves. Veerasaivism includes within itself a number of castes and sub-castes which form a hierarchy based on differential ritual status. In Kshetra, for instance, there are four Veerasaiva castes, each of which has a few sub-castes.

The axis of cleavage between orthodox Hinduism and Veerasaivism is more or less explicit in connection with the life-cycle ceremonies. For instance, the interval between the birth of a baby in a Veerasaiva family and the tying of the *lingam* to it, although it does imply a change of status especially of the baby, is not identical with birth pollution as observed in a Brahmanical household. Whether the interval between birth and the tying of the *lingam* to the baby could be considered a pollution period is more a matter of opinion than a certainty among individual Lingayat households.

Early writers<sup>1</sup> as well as modern anthropological monographs,<sup>2</sup> refer to Veerasaivas as a dissident Hindu sect. They constitute a ritual group opposed to Brahmanical caste and have their own priestly caste. Jangam, the Veerasaiva priests, serve all ranks of Veerasaivas on almost all ceremonial occasions. They also officiate for non-Lingayat and untouchable castes in Kshetra. The growing strength of Veerasaivism was pointed out by Thurston<sup>3</sup> in the first decade of this century, and in recent years the head of a Veerasaiva *Mutt*, in Dharwar district, claims to have converted some 20,000 people to Veerasaivism. Hundreds of Veerasaiva *Mutts* are scattered all over Karnatak. It is possible that conversion and propagation of the Veerasaiva faith are among the important aims of the *Mutt* organization.

The ritually self-contained Veerasaiva community claims to be equal to the twice-born. In the upper strata of the caste hierarchy, above the non-Lingayat and untouchable castes, the two caste-groups, i.e., the twice-born and the Veerasaivas, may be seen as maintaining a

1. A) Dubois, A, 1862, *A Description of the Character, Manners & Customs of the People of India* (Second Edn.)  
 B) Hastings, 1915. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, pp. 69-75.
2. A. Srinivas, 1955, 'The Social System of a Mysore Village' in *Village India*, Ed. Marriott. M.  
 B. Dube, S.C. 1955, *Indian Village*.  
 C. Epstein, T.S. 1962, *Economic Development & Social Change in South India*.
3. A. Thurston, E. 1909. Op. Cit. pp. 266-67.  
 B. Davis Kingslay, 1951. *The Population of India and Pakistan*. Unfortunately it has no figures on Veerasaiva Castes. And the Census undertaken in independent India does not record caste, except for Scheduled castes, as a matter of policy.

parallel status in Kshetra. Their mutually exclusive ritual observances make them rival groups. This rivalry does not always confine itself to differences in religious practices. Religious differences are put to secular use. Secular factors such as individual and group economic and political interests manipulate the religious differences to their own advantage. This further widens the cleavage.

The temple of Kshetra linga, a large Saivite temple in the village, is a major regional and local cult centre. It dominates the village and affects all fields of social activity. The ceremony and the ritual of the temple are controlled by one of the twice-born castes, and in particular, by a resident joint family of Kshatriyas.

The Kshatriya affinal links and traditions as substantiated by their geneologies, the founding of the temple and also the political history of the Deccan, suggest that they were connected with the now-extinct royal family of Vijayanagar. The Hindu empire of Vijayanagar founded in 1336, gave encouragement to all types of religions, and it also patronized Saivism (Veerasaivism) until it collapsed before the combined Muslim forces in 1565.

Bellary district was made over to the British in 1800, by the Nizam of Hyderabad. By this time the Kshatriyas were well established in the village and were in charge of the temple. Here I have attempted some reconstruction of the history of the village, and argue that British imperial rule and political atomisation led to increase in wealth, land-holding and the numerical strength of the Lingayat community. This encouraged them to attempt to acquire political dominance in the village, in addition to their economic and ritual dominance.

The Veerasaivas of Kshetra, supported by the Veerasaivas from the neighbouring villages coveted the Kshatriya ownership and control of temple resources, for the ultimate symbol of dominance in the village is control of the temple. This they failed to secure as I shall show later (see Chapter 7). The Veerasaivas exerted pressure on the Kshatriyas for nearly four decades, but the situation has been stabilised in the early 1920's by a legal decision in favour of the Kshatriyas. Accordingly the Kshatriyas possess the temple, but its administration is subject to the control of the government, the Hindu Religions Endowment Board while in Madras, and now the *Muzrai* Commissioner of the Government of Mysore, especially in the matter of temple funds.



At no stage in their struggle against the Kshatriyas did the Veerasaivas present a unified front. The fact that Veerasaivas are split into several castes and sub-castes partly explain this. Conversion from other castes to Veerasaivism did not wipe out customary differences that separate people and it still provides a major source of disunity among Lingayats. Further economic and political interests override caste and sub-caste solidarity among Lingayats. This prevents Veerasaivas from uniting and forming a solid group. In fact the disunity runs right through the Veerasaiva caste-groups and within a single sub-caste, like the Panchachara division in Kshetra. I have tried to account for this disunity at some length in the chapters on Lingayat sectarianism, temple politics and village secular politics. It seems that the major cleavage within the village is not so much between the Lingayats and the twice born, but between the several Lingayat groups which attempt to exploit religious differences in the village for their own ends. That Lingayats are divided among themselves emerges quite clearly in the chapters on temple and village secular politics.

The emphasis of the temple cult is on agricultural rites. It has attracted a large number of followers from several castes, and occupations, cutting across political, linguistic and cultural barriers. The followers of the cult are found in Madras, Andhra and Maharashtra states. Locally, however, the temple is a divisive factor, and the struggle for power between the groups is centred around the temple. But a consequence of the regional spread of the cult is the tendency to mitigate local tension. The pilgrims are one set of external agents whose presence reduces sectarian tensions and helps the village to function as a unit.

As pointed out earlier, with *pax Britannica* the entire country came under systematic rule. One of the effects of systematization consisted in regularising and, where necessary, limiting the power and privileges of locally dominant groups. In Kshetra, the Kshatriyas enjoyed many rights and privileges by owning the temple and controlling its administration, especially its lands and funds. From time to time the British Government put limitations on the extent of temple property, brought its finance under Government supervision and thus reduced the Kshatriya dominance in the village.

The limitations put on Kshatriya power and privileges by the Government led to a steady rise in the power of the Veerasaivas. But the Government regulations regarding the temple administration

especially its hold on temple funds, paved the way for contacts between Kshatriyas and officials. These official contacts, almost a privilege enjoyed by the Kshatriyas to the exclusion of villagers, helped the Kshatriyas to retain and exercise traditional power in the village. The role of the greater political powers is clearly visible here.

In independent India, the struggle between the Lingayats and Kshatriyas in Kshetra has entered a new field. The relationship between the two groups has been marked by increased tension, especially in the political arena, and this is also discernible at the state level. With the introduction of the statutory Panchayat Board, an anti-Kshatriya party of Lingayats has emerged. Elected leaders of the village Panchayat Board<sup>1</sup> are the non-official members who work along with Government officials in the administration of the village. In Kshetra, the Lingayat party is attempting to secure control of the village Panchayat Board and in particular the office of the Panchayat President, hitherto held by a senior member of the Kshatriya family.

The increasing self awareness of their identity and distinctness among the Lingayats of Kshetra is to be considered in the light of changes that have come about in a wider area. The formation of the new Mysore state according to the State's Reorganization Act of 1956, has resulted in Lingayats forming the largest single group in the state. Since then the political leadership of the state has passed into their hands. The emergence of Lingayats as a 'dominant caste' at the state level, is affecting inter-caste political relationships at the local level and is creating "a feeling for political power"<sup>2</sup> among the Lingayats of Kshetra.

The Lingayats have begun to realise that the Kshetra linga temple is a stumbling block to their political aspirations. Until recently, external agents like the Government and pilgrims helped to redress a situation in which sectarian particularism threatened to upset the working of the village. With a change of attitude and increase of Lingayat solidarity, the role of the temple in village politics has also acquired a new dimension.

Political behaviour is influenced by appeals to the religious susceptibilities of the people through the temple. The conflict of

1. Hereafter it will be referred to as V.P.B.

2. Srinivas, 1962, 'The Indian Road to Equality' in *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, p. 90.



traditional values, as buttressed by religion, with new social systems that economic and political changes are bringing into existence is discernible here. The conflict between traditional values and emergent new forces of social change is true everywhere and at all times. It is a contemporary problem in the so-called developing countries of Asia.

I have tried to analyse the conflict between 'traditional values' and 'emergent' democratic values. The traditional political role of the Kshatriyas is being challenged by the Lingayats of Kshetra is a case in point. Also the Kshatriya President's party is able to control the 'democratic' V.P.B. by exploiting the symbolic appeal of the temple. The symbols used by the Lingayat party, especially those drawn from Western economic and political sources, were less successful in impressing the villagers during Panchayat elections. In some respects the Veerasaiva religious movement invoked a new set of values, closer to the Western secular outlook. But it was not able to succeed against the traditional values of Hindu society.

Charismatic leaders in modern India, notably Gandhi and his followers, have but re-emphasized the 'traditional' elements in Hindu culture. Tradition is valued for its own sake, and so is traditional authority. If I can put it in Weberian terms,<sup>1</sup> India is a tradition-oriented society. Modern economic and political ideas can be intelligible to people only if they reach them through the familiar channels of communication. The cow, for instance, has a traditional value as *Gomata* (Cow, the mother). Hence whenever the symbol of a cow is used, such as during elections by political parties, people readily understand the implications and attach as much sanctity to the symbol as they attach to the animal itself.

In chapter one, I shall give a brief account of the political history of the area and then proceed to examine the interplay of greater political powers and their impact on the village socio-political relationships in a historic perspective. Kshetra was not insulated against the greater part of the Deccan. It has always been responsive to the outside world. This is borne out by the ecological and historical background of the village. The geographical settings of Kshetra provided a channel for the impact of external agents and the consequent reaction of the village, leading to social change. Some of the political, economic and social changes in Kshetra reveal a linkage with the wider systems of the Deccan area.

1. Weber, Max. 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Trans, Henderson, A.R. & Parsons, T. See Chapter 3 especially pp. 297-360. Also see his *Essays in Sociology*, 1946, Chapter 16.



# **PART I**

## **CHAPTER I**

### **A BRIEF POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE DECCAN**

HERE what is of relevance is the historical character of certain events that occurred in South India with special reference to Bellary District and Kshetra. The rise and fall of several political powers—the Muslims from the north, the Hindu and Muslim rulers of the South, and finally the British—have all left deep imprints. The many-sided social changes that came about may be attributed to the interplay of different political powers. A brief reference to the past history of the area is necessary. These are relevant and help us to understand the social changes which came about subsequently. An attempt is made to outline them below.

During the 11th and early 12th century A.D., the area was under the rule of the Western Chalukyas. Chalukyan architecture is famous for its style throughout South India. Some of the Chalukyan temples found in the Western taluks of Bellary district, including those in Harapanahalli and Hadagalli taluk, were built during this period. The Mallikarjuna temple at Guruvathi, a neighbouring village of Kshetra is certainly magnificent. Kshetra itself has a Chalukyan temple dedicated to Kalleswara. By the middle of the 12th century the Chalukyas succumbed to the attacks of rulers of three dynasties which were originally their own feudatories. One of them was Bijjala of the Kalachurya dynasty.

### 1. The Growth and Spread of Veerasaivism

Bijjala threw off his allegiance to the Chalukyas by 1157; captured much of Chalukyan country, and made their capital Kalyani his own capital. It was during this time that Basava, a Saiva Brahmin by birth, who became Chief Minister and later Treasurer to Bijjala, succeeded in expounding the tenets of Veerasaivism, which accounts for the spread and concentration of this sect in the area.

Bijjala was a Jain by religion. He encouraged Basava's new religious approach in the beginning. It is said that he even gave one of his sisters in marriage to Basava to strengthen his ties with him. The exponents of Veerasaivism at this stage addressed themselves to the masses in the vernacular. Hence they were able to recruit a large number of people to the new faith in a surprisingly short period. This faith repudiated the caste distinctions upheld by the Brahmanical order and denounced the practice of animal sacrifice so common in Vedic religion. It was anti-Brahmanical in its teachings, but it shared the idea of non-violence with the Jains. Yet differences of opinion soon arose between Bijjala and Basava. "According to some doubtful legends, Bijjala lost his life on account of the hostility of the newly risen sect of Lingayats whom he persecuted."<sup>1</sup>

The story is that Bijjala gave orders that the eyes of two families of newly converted Lingayats were to be put out. One Madhuvarasa, a Brahmin convert, arranged his daughter's marriage with the son of Haralaiah, an Untouchable Madiga convert. Basava approved of this union. Bijjala, though a Jain, did not approve of the union. Jainism and Buddhism were the earliest rebel sects which tried to repudiate the caste system. However, they were unable to achieve this. The union between a Brahmin and an Untouchable was viewed as causing social confusion (*varna Sankara*) by Bijjala. Hence he ordered the offenders to be punished and began to persecute the Veerasaivas in general. This led the Veerasaivas to organize themselves into a unit, which according to the legend, ultimately succeeded in murdering Bijjala.

That Veerasaivism in the early stages of its spread had to encounter Jain opposition is asseverated by another myth: the *Ablur purana*. According to this, Veerasaivism triumphed over the Jains with the help of a man of Panchala (artisan) caste. This man

1. Sastri, K.A.N., *A History of South India* 1955 p. 189.



is revered as spiritual Teacher of the Panchala caste to-day.

## 2. The Muslim Invasion

About 1310, Mallick Kafur, the famous General of Allaudin Khilji of the Khilji dynasty of Delhi, invaded the Deccan. He conquered parts of the Deccan and left behind him Muslim governors. Again in 1327, Mahammed-bin-Toghaluk, the Muslim invader from the North, conquered the kingdom of Anegondi, and members of the Anegondi royal family were scattered after the defeat. Mahammed-bin-Toghaluk left a Muslim governor at Anegondi and returned to Delhi. "The movement for the liberation of the Deccan from the Muslims may be said to have begun immediately after the Sultan left for northern India in 1329. The people had never willingly accepted Muslim rule. At this time, moreover, they and their leaders were under the influence of a strong revival of Saivism and in no mood to submit passively to the profanation and destruction of their temples and to the corruption and overthrow of their long-established usages. In its single-minded devotion to Shiva, its fanatical intolerance of the followers of any other creed, whom it stigmatized as *Bhavis* (infidels), and in its ideal of perfect equality among the *Bhaktas* (devotees), the new Saivism was a worthy rival of Islam, and the impetus it gave to politics had not a little to do with the failure of Toghaluk rule to take root in many parts of the Deccan. The abrogation of the religious and charitable endowments, and the extortions to which the farmers and artisans were subjected by the Sultan and his provincial governors, added the stimulus of material interest and strengthened the movement for liberation."<sup>1</sup>

The Hindus around Anegondi rose in revolt against its Muslim governor. The anarchy and confusion that followed drove home to the Sultan of Delhi that order could be restored only by some one connected with the last Raja of Anegondi. Accordingly, Harihara and Bukka, who had become prisoners and were carried to Delhi after the fall of Anegondi, were sent back to Anegondi. The brothers restored order in the country. Very soon they succeeded in laying the foundation for the great Hindu empire of Vijayanagar with its capital at Hampi in 1336.

## 3. The Kingdom of Vijayanagar

The Saivism described by Sastri above is, of course, Veerasai-

1. Sastri K.A.N. 1965, *op. cit.* pp. 225-6.

vism. The new faith enjoyed royal patronage under the Vijayanagar rulers.

The seed of the Islamic faith in the South was sown by the Muslim invaders from the North. The new kingdom could not check the Muslim kingdoms that arose in South India. True, the rise of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, which ruled the country for nearly two centuries effectively, checked the advance of Muslims from the North. But it itself was engaged in a longdrawn out struggle for about 135 years with the neighbouring Muslim rulers of the Bahamani kingdom with its capital at Devagiri.

Between 1447 and 1486, the internal dissensions among the Vijayanagar royal dynasty gave rise to a second dynasty. Meanwhile, the Bahamani kingdom was split into five independent kingdoms of Bijapur, Ahamadabad, Berar, Ahamadnagar and Golconda. The increased internal dissensions in the Vijayanagar royal dynasty made it impossible to fight these five Muslim kingdoms, and a battle with the king of Ahamadnagar led to its ultimate ruin. The battle of Talikota, in 1565, sounded a death knell to the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar. The existing representatives of the Vijayanagar dynasty are found at Anegondi, in Raichur district and Belagatti, in Shimoga district. They are holding *jaghirs* or rent-free land, and till recently drawing allowances from the Government. The Kshetra Kshatriya family has affinal links with both of them.

In this perennial strife between Hindu and Muslim rulers, Bellary district by slow degrees fell into the hands of a number of minor chiefs (*poleyagars*) around 1568. These minor chiefs were nominally subject to the Sultan of Bijapur, but each assumed independent power in the country round about them. The minor chiefs were never effectively controlled by the Sultan of Bijapur. They always shifted their allegiance from a less powerful to a more powerful ruler. With the rise of Shivaji, the Maratta leader in 1678, all the minor chiefs who were formerly under the Sultan of Bijapur, began to pay tribute to Shivaji.

The Maratta power was partly replaced by the rise of Hyder Ali and his son Tippu Sultan of Mysore. Between 1761-86, many minor chiefs of Bellary district were reduced to submission. This state of affairs was first checked and then stopped by the combined forces of the British, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marattas. The allies defeated Tippu in two successive wars in 1792 and 1799. They took most of the territory from Tippu and distributed it among themselves. The areas obtained in this way were made over to the

British by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800. The Nizam agreed to cede to the English the districts of Bellary, Ananthapur, Cuddapah and part of Kurnool in return for a subsidiary force of the former to be stationed in his dominions. These were known as the "ceded districts". Thus Bellary district passed into the hands of the British.

#### 4. The Administrative System

There are no ways of knowing the system of land holding and financial administration in this area until the rise of the Vijayanagar empire. Under the Vijayanagar empire taxes were paid in kind and land was considered to belong to the sovereign. When the area passed into the hands of the Bijapur kings they did not meddle with the ample rent-free (*inam*) lands made to village servants, and Brahmins, and with those set apart for the support of the temple. They were allowed to continue as under the previous government. But the one great contribution made by the Muslim kings of Bijapur was the substitution of money rent for rent in kind, although it was lacking in fixity and regulations.

The next powers that swept over the Deccan after Bijapur i.e., the Marattas, and Hyder Ali, and Tippu Sultan of Mysore, did not have time to enquire thoroughly into the revenue system. They were engaged in extending their dominions by conquest. However, it is said of Hyder and Tippu that they collected large sums through "the resumption of Inams, the augmentation of low rents, and the expulsion of the *poleyagars*."<sup>1</sup>

The weak government of the Nizam of Hyderabad, coupled with the return of many minor chiefs, and famines in the taluks of Bellary, Rayadurg and other places, brought about a diminution of revenue. The chaos and confusion, almost bordering on civil strife among minor chiefs of this period, reduced the people to paupers. It is said, that even village officers like the Headman and the Accountant acted like little princes in the village. Anarchy followed the mismanagement of affairs by too many irresponsible officers of the Nizam and of the minor chiefs. Thus when the British took charge of the ceded districts in 1800, it was necessary to introduce law and order to regularise people's lives.

The chief difficulty of the British Government was the turbulence of the many minor chiefs who held numerous forts in the district and terrorised the people round about them. It is said that however

1. Francis, W. 1904, *Gazetteer of the Bellary District*, Vol. 1, p. 152.



meagre the income, a minor chief "was regularly installed with all the form of the prince of an extensive territory and had his nominal officers of State subsisting on small portions of land."<sup>1</sup> Within a year of British rule there was no force in the area to give any formidable opposition. The minor chiefs, one by one, were reduced to order or dispossessed "with wonderful rapidity and astonishingly little parade or fuss."<sup>2</sup> Around 1904, there remained [in Bellary district only twenty three descendants of the minor chiefs drawing allowances from the Government.

The first thing that Munro did as the principal British Collector—with his headquarters at Ananthapur—was to introduce the detailed 'kulwar' or 'ryotwari' system of landholding in this area in 1801-2. Accordingly, every *ryot* held his land immediately from the Government under a *patta* from the Collector, which specified the land he had occupied and the assessment he had to pay. It is said, "The assessment, which was paid in money, was in theory regulated by the quality of the land, the condition of the cultivator and the value (according to the prices of a series of years) of the supposed gross produce, of which last it purported to take forty-five per cent."<sup>3</sup>

The rent-free lands of the district were not materially reduced after the district came under British rule. But still the Government took steps to investigate the actual rights of Inam landholders to effect a settlement as early as 1861, when forty-seven per cent of the cultivated land came under a variety of Inams. It was necessary for the Government to introduce methods to prevent cultivators from cultivating Inam lands more than Government lands to the detriment of revenue.

The enfranchisement of the village service Inams was ordered by the Government in 1888. In the 1860's the people who enjoyed temple Inams for service in the Kshetra linga temple, including the Kshatriya family, obtained enfranchisement. The Lingayat servants of the temple as will become clear later, made wanton efforts around 1924 to transfer all such land to the name of the deity. This was designed to harass the Kshatriyas. But finally when the Lingayat servants themselves were dismissed from temple service and were deprived of the use of the temple land in the early 1940's, they started fighting for individual rights of ownership. This will be discussed in detail in the chapter on temple politics.

This part of the Deccan which came under British rule could

1. Francis, W. 1904, Ibid, p. 47.

2. Francis, W. 1904, Ibid, p. 48.

3. Francis, W. 1904, op. cit. p. 155



not get over the effects of famine, pestilence, cholera and all the rest of the natural calamities that severely hit many areas for well over a century until early 1900. It has been truly summed up : "the unfortunate *ryot* has hardly emerged from one famine before he is submerged under another."<sup>1</sup> The great famine of 1876-78 hit Bellary district severely, when nearly 1/5 of its population, some 3,30,000 people, were said to have perished from starvation or disease. Also a considerable number of people were said to have moved to Mysore and Bombay Presidency, while immigration into the district was negligible.

### 5. Bellary District and Kshetra

The Deccan is described as having been a sparsely populated area for a long time. In 1904, Kshetra had a population of 1,722. Writing on the population of Hadagalli taluk, Francis observes, "the abrupt decline which occurred in the number of its inhabitants between 1891 and 1901, was due to the fact that in the former year the census fell upon a date on which large crowds of pilgrims from Bombay and Mysore were assembled at the great festival at 'Kshetra' and consequently the population as then enumerated was greatly above the normal."<sup>2</sup> However, the official statistics for Kshetra do not show much of an increase in population, for, in 1911, it had a population of 1,724, which came down to 1,593 in 1921 owing to the great epidemic of influenza in 1918. It is only after 1931 that the population increased rapidly.

"The changes in the divisional charges since the old Bellary district was formed in 1808 have been constant and would be tedious to recount in detail."<sup>3</sup> The district as it was up to 1953 was constituted in 1882. During 1953, the three predominantly Telugu-speaking taluks of Alur, Adoni and Rayadurg were included in the newly created linguistic state of Andhra Pradesh. This brought about a change in the district boundary. Prior to this, the taluk boundaries had changed in the 1950's. A dam was erected across the Tungabhadra near Hospet. As a result of this several villagers in the area were ordered to move away from the dam site.

Further, a tiny sub-taluk of Mallapuram was carved out of Hadagalli, Harapanahalli and Hospet taluks to facilitate administration of the Tungabhadra project. With these overall changes, the taluk boundaries have changed and many villages have been transferred from one taluk to another. For instance, Guruvathi which

1. Francis, W. 1904, op. cit., p. 141.

2. Francis, W. 1904, Ibid, p. 237.

3. Ibid, p. 176.

was in Harapanahalli taluk for a long time is now in Hadagalli tal k.

According to the States Reorganization Act of November 1956, the Kannada-speaking areas of Bombay, Hyderabad and Madras were transferred to form the new Mysore state. With this expansion Bellary district occupies the central part of the state. Naturally the people of the district are becoming conscious of their strategic position and they are expecting an all round improvement in the district. It is hoped that it will one day revive the glory of the "forgotten Empire."<sup>1</sup>

I have described the political history of the area so far. The salient features that emerge out of this description are the spread of Veerasaivism in the 12th century and the patronage it received at the hands of Vijayanagar kings from the 14th to the 16th century, and the collapse of the Vijayanagar empire and the subsequent movement of some members of the royal family, the Kshatriyas of Kshetra being among them. The movement of the Kshatriyas will be traced in detail, in connection with the founding of the temple in Kshetra.

Major R. Henderson, writing in 1852 said that "the district is actually locked up from surrounding provinces and without means either for the introduction of European articles of commerce or for export of its produce."<sup>2</sup> This is not a true picture, although there is an element of truth in it, insofar as it implied lack of easy means of communication. The district has never been really closed to external influence from the start. The political and economic changes which came about in the Deccan, penetrated most parts of the country.

The growing Veerasaiva caste was opposed to Brahmanical Hinduism. The religious differences did not remain for long only on an ideological basis. Many other factors entered to widen the gulf. In Kshetra the Kshatriya controlled temple was envied by the Veerasaivas. The material interest in temple affairs, especially its six hundred and odd acres of Inam land, roused the Veerasaivas to put forward rival claims to the possession of the temple on a religious basis.

The Veerasaivas claimed the temple on a religious basis because the diety in it is one of the several incarnations of Shiva. Veerasaivism regards Shiva as the supreme diety of the Hindu 'Trinity'—Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara. The Veerasaivas also declared Kshetra to be a place of pilgrimage for the Veerasaiva community. The nature of the conflict was not confined to Kshetra : external agents were drawn in. Leaving aside the administrators who

1. Sewell, R. 1924 (Reprint) *A Forgotten Empire*, (Vijayanagar).

2. Francis, W. 1904, op. cit., p. 116.

were one set of external agents, the other set consisted largely of Veerasaivas coming from the neighbouring villages who tried in every way to oust the Kshatriyas.

#### **6. The Interplay of Local and Regional Forces and the Implications of Veerasaiva Assertion**

Kshetra thus forms a social entity within the larger area of the Deccan. The political, economic, and religious activities of the village can be further understood by placing Kshetra in its regional context rather than by studying it as an isolated unit. Kshetra forms a sub-system in the wider system of the Deccan. Although Kshetra could be also studied as a village community and as a system in itself, it is more appropriate and meaningful to place it in the regional context as it lends the desired historical depth to the study. While analysing the theme of socio-political relationships between the two dominant castes, namely the Kshatriyas and Veerasaivas of Kshetra, the historical processes which took place outside the village, but intimately influenced the course of events in the village, can never be lost sight of.

Kshetra as a village community has a form of its own. Some eighteen castes are represented here. Veerasaivas form one of the numerically dominant castes. This is in tune with the area under consideration. The concentration of Veerasaivas in Bellary, Chitradurga, Dharwar, Bijapur and Belgaum districts seems natural in view of the fact that Basava and his early followers lived and preached in the Bijapur area, drawing their converts mainly from among the lower orders.

The Veerasaiva sectarian movement was opposed to orthodox Brahmanical Hinduism from the first. The precepts and practices of the Veerasaivas in Kshetra as will be delineated in chapters on village social structure and Lingayat sectarianism, illustrate the lines of divergence between the twice-born and the Veerasaivas. The early preachers decried the rigidity of the Brahmanical caste system. They directed their efforts to remove caste distinctions and bring about social equality, at least among Veerasaivas. But they were not successful. This is evident from the number of castes and sub-castes among the Veerasaivas of Kshetra who form an hierarchy among themselves.

Veerasaivism which arose as a contending force against Brahmanical religion adopted certain devices to connect it with orthodox Hinduism and simultaneously to challenge the status of Brahmins and claim equality with them. It put forward a myth of origin



relating how the five great Spiritual Teachers established spiritual thrones in North and South India to perpetuate the Veerasaiva faith. The myth contains the implication that Veerasaivism is as widespread and as ancient as the Brahmanical religion itself.

Veerasaivas constitute a regional group and are concentrated in parts of South India. But the myth of the five spiritual thrones locates one of them at Banaras and another at Kedara in the Himalayas. The reference to these Veerasaiva Mutts itself is no proof of the spread of the sect in North India. There are no Lingayats] in Bisipara, Rampur and Ramkheri.<sup>1</sup> Compared with them Kshetra is rather atypical. The atypical nature will be highlighted while discussing the social structure of the village.

The South Indian Veerasaivas, however, believe in the Veerasaiva Mutts in the North and refer to them as and when occasion arises. They maintain a fiction about these Mutts in the North, although there is no evidence that Veerasaivas make pilgrimages to these places. The Jangams of Kshetra claim the head of the Banaras Mutt as their spiritual teacher, but none of them has ever visited Banaras.

To challenge the ritual superiority of Brahmins and in fact to assert equal status with Brahmins, Veerasaivism proclaimed an independent caste of priests within itself known as Jangams, and made vegetarianism and teetotalism important Veerasaiva tenets, on par with Brahmanical Hinduism.

It recruited members from other castes. Conversion to Veerasaivism did not prevent them from following their traditional occupations, or the practices peculiar to their castes before conversion. For instance, Banajigas are normally traders and Sadarus have a clan system. Veerasaivism itself was surrounded by and is operating in a caste-oriented society. The result is that Veerasaivas are divided into a number of castes and sub-castes with an hierarchy among themselves. If the Veerasaiva philosophy were rigid, and had laid down the following of a particular vocation for instance, as one of its tenets, perhaps it would have prevented the development of some sub-castes and perhaps have led to more solidarity among the Veerasaivas.

Veerasaivism threatened to disrupt the whole system of the Brahmanical castes, but the structure did not disappear. It reacted with flexibility and made a place for Veerasaivas within its

1. Bailey, F.G. *Cast and Economic Frontier* 1957; Lewis, O, *Village Life in Northern India* 1955; Marriott, M. *Village in India* 1955.



hierarchy. Although the traditional structure retained its unity and exclusiveness, it was prepared for peaceful co-existence with the many sectarian movements, such as the Veerasaivas. But its existence is marked by a cleavage. The cleavage among the high Hindu castes in Kshetra, namely the Veerasaivas and the Kshatriyas, is a historical fact which could be understood only by reference to the wider area.

Religious practices and precepts differentiate the Kshatriyas from the Veerasaivas, making them constitute two different caste-groups. These differences become functionally important not so much with reference to caste customs but to other and secular factors. Their economic and political interests encourage caste-groups to emphasize the religious dichotomy, so that people fight for secular interests in terms of apparent religious differences. This widens the cleavage between the two contending groups.

As will become clear later, the Veerasaivas of Kshetra and the neighbourhood showed interest in the Kshatriya-controlled temple. The desire for control of the temple resources led to a series of court cases which the Veerasaivas fought against the Kshatriyas. In doing this, the Veerasaivas advanced religious causes. Because the deity in the temple is one of the several incarnations of Shiva, and since the Veerasaivas regard themselves as worshippers of Shiva in particular, they asserted that the temple was a Veerasaiva religious centre.

The Veerasaivas pointed out further that according to orthodox Hinduism only Veerasaivas and Brahmins could be religious preachers and heads of Mutts. The assumption of a religious role by the Kshatriyas of Kshetra as a consequence of heading the temple, was pointed out as contrary to orthodox Hinduism, amounting to transgression of traditional norms. On the strength of this argument, the Veerasaivas alleged that the Kshatriyas had wrongfully usurped the proprietorship of the temple from the Jangams of Shivapur, a neighbouring village in Dharwar district.

In this long-extended struggle between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas of Kshetra for control of the local temple and its economic resources, external agents were drawn in as adjudicators. The Government and the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, which were called in to arbitrate between the contending parties, confirmed the Kshatriya rights of proprietorship over the temple. This was only a temporary measure to rule out the Veerasaiva claim. It did not bridge the gulf between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas, but rather widened the cleavage.

Recent political changes in the wider area have affected the

village organization and intercaste political relationships. The Village Panchayat Board, a statutory body, is dominated by the Kshatriyas. Since the introduction of the Panchayat Board in 1949, a Kshatriya has been the President. Since then, the Veerasaivas have lost economic interest in the temple. Instead they are now trying to capture the office of V.P.B. President.

### 7. The Kshatriya Tradition of Political Dominance

The Kshatriyas of Kshetra at one time came from outside. They came to Kshetra from a distant place in the Alur taluk of 'old' Bellary district (see Map 1B). They had moved to Alur taluk originally from Anegondi. Historical facts have been obscured by the myth of the founding of the Kshetra Linga temple. An analysis of the myth, however, reveals that Kshatriya political dominance and official contacts were not an innovation but a tradition. The Kshatriyas of Kshetra may be said to have a tradition of political dominance and official contacts.

The connection of the Kshetra Kshatriyas as already stated above, with the now-extinct Vijayanagar royal family partly accounts for their military tradition and political role. "Vijayanagar was perhaps the nearest approach to a war-state ever made by a Hindu Kingdom ; and its political organization was dominated by its military needs."<sup>1</sup> This is borne out by the series of wars Vijayanagar waged for nearly 135 years against the Muslim neighbours of the Bahamani kingdoms.

The Vijayanagar rulers controlled their vast empire by keeping the princes of the royal family dispersed and in charge of distant territories. Ruler after ruler favoured his own sons in preference to cousins and more distant relatives as provincial governors. The strategy adopted in ruling the empire had its strong and weak points. There are many parallels of the kind in the African political system. With a few exceptions, the Vijayanagar kingdom resembles the Zulu kingdom under Shaka.<sup>2</sup>

This being so, it is probable that in the remote past an ancestor of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra might have been put in charge of Meenagondi. The title "Original rulers of Meenagondi" (*Adi Meenagondi Puravaradhisha*), is retained and used by the Kshatriyas of Kshetra even to-day. At one time they ruled over Meenagondi ; the title has a clear political significance.

1. Sastri K.A.N., 1955. op. cit., p. 295.

2. Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, *African Political System*, 1947, See also the *Kingdom of the Zulu in South Africa* pp. 25-55 by Max Gluckman, and *The Kingdom of the Ankole in Uganda* pp. 131-62 by Oberg. K.



Historical facts combined with personal aspirations and a bent for religious life might have prompted the half-mythical figure, Kapila Muni, to move out from Meenagondi and settle in Kshetra. Implicit in this movement was a change of tradition, in that the Kshatriyas began to head a temple instead of fighting. A spiritual throne was established at Kshetra. Hence the Kshatriyas of Kshetra described themselves as "Lords of the Kshetra throne" (*Kshetra Simhasanadhipathi*). That the tradition of fighting is continued on a mystical plane is borne out by the cult of the temple. The office of "sword-bearers" held by the Kshatriyas established the continuity of their tradition as they symbolically defend the secular interest of the deity. There is nothing very strange in the Kshatriyas being both warriors and overlords of a temple. The Malabar chiefdoms<sup>1</sup> of the 18th century provide one set of parallels, while the more familiar examples are the Shilluk, Anuak<sup>2</sup> and the Banyankole, where the political and ritual roles of a Chief were intertwined.

The change of tradition and movement of the Kshatriyas still point to the strategy which the Kshatriyas seem to have retained in the religious sphere after having given up political activities. In the administration of the 'religious empire', the Kshatriyas have followed the same device. There is an informal division of districts, where different heads of Kshatriya families will tour and visit the followers of the cult and collect ceremonial fees.

A branch of the Kshetra Kshatriya family is today in charge of a similar temple in Alur taluk, at Meenagondi near Neraniki. Another branch has been established at Shivaragudda in Dharwar district. Of the existing three lineages of Kshetra Kshatriyas which form the core of the Kshatriya community, the senior line (at the moment only one family) is headed by an accountant at Chikka Guruvathi in Dharwar district. This office and the property attached to it were at one time conceived as instruments to establish the senior line there. A member of the junior line was married uxoriously at Belagatti, but he returned to Kshetra later.

It is the middle line which is most prominent at Kshetra. The trustee and the President are uterine brothers. Even here there seems to be a further arrangement between the families. As much as 80 acres of the 'sword-bearers' land is in possession of the

1. Miller, Eric, "Caste and Territory in Malabar", June 1954, in *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 56, No. 3.

2. Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940, *The Political System of the Anuak*.  
 " " 1948, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*.

President. The remainder of the land is used by other agnates, while a part of it is still to be reclaimed from a Lingayat creditor. The trustee does not derive any financial benefits from the temple. He visits the followers of the cult and collects enough money to maintain his family. Further he is in charge of a similar temple at Chikka Kshetra near Savanur in Dharwar District.

A replica of Kshetra temple was built by one Hanumantha Gowda, a Brahmin votary of Kshetra Linga, who was also a minor chief (*poleyagar*) at Savanur around 1750. He endowed the temple at Chikka Kshetra with some lands (about one hundred acres) and gave the entire property as a gift to the Kshatriyas of Kshetra. Although none of the Kshetra Kshatriyas live there, the temple is under their control. They visit and perform ritual services whenever necessary. A Brahmin priest is engaged to conduct the daily worship and he enjoys the use of some land. The rest of the temple land (about 80 acres) at Chikka Kshetra is leased to tenants and the amount released goes to the trustee.

I need only say that the Kshatriyas of Kshetra followed the policy of the rulers of Vijayanagar in some respects, down to the present day. This particularly holds good for the political device whereby members of the royal family were in charge of distant parts of the kingdom, thus helping to prevent rebellion and to keep the kingdom intact. The point I want to emphasize here is that a similar motive is visible in the territorial distribution and connections of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra.

Yet it may happen that branches of a family placed in distant parts may assume independence, ignore the parental stock and even threaten to override them. The relation of the Shivaragudda and Meenagondi Kshatriya families with the Kshetra Kshatriyas exhibit a tendency towards independence. In fact, both politically and economically, they are independent of the Kshetra Kshatriyas in spite of kinship ties. The Kshatriyas of Kshetra occasionally mention this break between the three places. The Kshetra Kshatriyas claim to be the parent stock, while the Shivaragudda and Meenagondi branches are seen as rebellious junior branches of the family.

### **8. The Role of Greater Political Powers**

The Kshetra Kshatriya family received a gift of four surrounding villages in 1788. This gift made by Sardar Sahib brought about certain changes. A fresh wave of 'strangers' differing in religious faith from the Kshatriyas came to live in Kshetra. It also meant, as the Kshatriyas claimed, a limit on the independent Kshatriya political role. Prior to



this historic gift it is believed that the Kshatriyas "owned everything" and ruled over the four villages and the surrounding areas.

The Kshatriyas say that their ancestors created the posts of village Headman and Accountant and appointed their incumbents. They built the temple, endowed it with lands and took local castes into temple service and gave them the use of temple land. The 1788 gift reduced the Kshatriyas to a subordinate position, in that they became vassals of Sardar Sahib. According to the gift deed, the Kshatriyas were given the right to collect tax, so that they probably held the office of Village Headman and Accountant among themselves. The tax collectors were at odds with the tax-payers—the Lingayat agriculturists who moved into Kshetra. Subsequent political changes accelerated and widened this cleavage.

The British who took charge of the district around 1800, first addressed themselves to bringing about land reforms. The *ryotwari* system of landholding set the Lingayat cultivators free from Kshatriya control. The political authority of the Kshatriyas as tax collectors vanished as each farmer paid land revenue directly to the Government. Whether the Kshatriyas ceased to hold the office of Headman and Accountant voluntarily or the British appointed a Lingayat Headman and a Brahmin Accountant of their own choice is not clear. However, the Kshatriyas ceased to be tax collectors under the British administration. The British Government recognized the Kshatriyas as heads of the temple but not as owners of its property. Temple lands were enfranchised in the name of individual service-holders in the 1860's and continued to be so until 1924.

With the advent of British rule, Kshatriya economic rights, political authority, and juridical powers waned locally. But they were able to compensate for this by the outward extension of their powers as guardians of the temple cult. The followers of the temple cult submitted to the Kshatriya political and judicial authority and began to reward them economically.

The regional spread of the cult provided an avenue for the continuation of their political role by the Kshatriyas. The mobility of the Kshatriyas accounts for their wider contact and knowledge of the external world. Their historically-established movement, affinal links, tours among their cult followers covering a vast region in the Deccan, have all helped in establishing these wider contacts. The financial and other assistance given by the followers of the cult and affines during times of hardship to the Kshatriyas of Kshetra is a function of these external contacts. The knowledge of the Telugu

language which is the medium of administrative rule also helped them. All these have gone a long way in strengthening the Kshatriya tradition of political leadership.

Their official contacts increased as a result of lawsuits filed by the Lingayats contesting the ownership of the temple. The Government, however, established the Kshatriyas as proprietors of the temple and brought it under Government control. Temple administration came under official supervision. Some of the Government officers themselves were followers of the cult. This situation further strengthened the ties between the Kshatriyas and Government officers. As a result, the more the Government interfered with temple affairs limiting and legitimizing the Kshatriya rights, the more the Kshatriyas came in contact with its officers.

Official contacts, and hence the political leadership of the Kshatriyas in the statutory Panchayat of the village, have to be looked at from the above angle. It only reaffirms the tradition. Indeed, the Madras Panchayat Act, as will become clear later, provided a constitutional safeguard which strengthened the position of the President of the Village Panchayat Board.

According to the Act, the President was to be elected by the village and therefore was not responsible to the Panchayat members. Neither the Panchayat Board members, nor the District Board could bring a motion of no-confidence against the President. They were required to obtain the permission of the Inspector of Local Boards at Madras before taking any action against the President. The District Board failed in its attempt against the President in 1950, when the latter collected festival dues from the District Board officials. The officials filed a suit against the President without the permission of the Inspector of Local Boards. The President was supported against the District Board officials. Such constitutional safeguards increased the security of the political leadership of the Kshatriyas.

The Veerasaivas of Kshetra, in contrast to the Kshatriyas, do not have a tradition of political leadership. Despite their attempts to overthrow the Kshatriyas they lack leaders and were not organized during the 1960 village Panchayat elections. Knowledge of the wider area, official contacts and other prerequisites have been, until now, a monopoly of the Kshatriyas. Since Kshetra is only a border village in Madras Presidency (formerly), its geographical situation has had adverse effects on the position of the Veerasaivas. They did not go into the interior of the district to develop any sort of contact. All the trade contacts of Kshetra are with Chitradurga and Dharwar

districts and it has been so for many decades. The point I want to make here is that the Lingayats of Kshetra lived on a cultural and linguistic boundary-line in Madras Presidency.

Bellary district was incorporated with Mysore state in 1953. Since then the Lingayat-Kshatriya relationship has acquired a new dimension. Aspirations for political power have replaced the previous economic interest of the Lingayats in the temple. The formation of the 'new' Mysore state in 1956 has awakened the Lingayats of Kshetra. Lingayats form the single largest community in the new state, constituting about 20% of the population and they enjoy both economic and political dominance. Consciousness of the strength and position of Lingayats at the state level has evoked a degree of response among the Lingayats of Kshetra. Hence their assertion that they ought to be the political leaders of the village.

A brief reference to the political forces operating in the area from 12th century A.D. onwards up to the present, points to the fact that Indian villages, at least in the Deccan did not function as 'isolate republics'. The degree of socio-political relationships at different levels and times could be best understood by way of studying Kshetra as a part of the wider area. The wider area has relevance and in many respects a direct bearing on the events in Kshetra both in the past and in contemporary times. In post-Independence India, the formation of linguistic states and the merger of Kannada-speaking areas has resulted in the emergence of Lingayats as a politically and numerically dominant caste at the state level. This is percolating down to district and lesser political levels and affecting inter-caste relationships locally at the village level.

Before analysing the processes at work in the village as part of a wider area, in Chapter II I will outline the ecological and historical background of the region with particular reference to Kshetra.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ECOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

KSHETRA is a village in the Hadagalli *taluk* of the Bellary district in the enlarged Mysore state. The 'enlarged' or 'new' Mysore state, formed on a linguistic basis in 1956, is almost double the size of the old Mysore state. The Kannada-speaking areas of Bombay, Hyderabad, and Madras Presidency were incorporated with 'old' Mysore to form the new state. Up to 1953, Bellary district was in Madras Presidency. Andhra state, the first linguistic state in India, was formed during 1953 and the Telugu-speaking areas in Bellary district were merged with Andhra, while the predominantly Kannada-speaking areas were merged with Mysore.<sup>1</sup> Many rules and regulations of the Madras Government, for instance those governing village *Panchayat* Board organisations, continued in force in Bellary district up to March-April 1960. Full administrative integration of Bellary with Mysore took some time.

#### Physical Features

Ballary district, named after Ballary town, the headquarters of the district, is on the Deccan table land. The entire district is one vast treeless plain broken occasionally by granite masses that spring abruptly from the surrounding sheet of cotton soil. It is, in fact, an extensive plateau tilted up in the west on the shoulders of the Ghats and sloping down towards the eastern coast. The two natural divisions of the district are its eastern and western moieties.

1. For details see Chapter I above.



The eastern taluks of Alur, Adoni, Bellary and Rayadurg are flat and treeless. Alur, Adoni and Rayadurg have been included in Andhra Pradesh since the formation of linguistic states. So of the four eastern taluks only Bellary concerns us. The western part of the district contains scattered patches of cotton soil, mostly covered with red and ferruginous soil. Except in Hadagalli taluk, it is broken up by successive ridges of wild and rugged hills. It lies at a greater elevation than the eastern side. However, both divisions gradually slope towards the river Tungabhadra in the north.

The four hundred-mile long river Tungabhadra formed the political boundary up to the mid-1950's, between Mysore and Bombay, Bombay and Madras, and Madras and Hyderabad. It still forms a natural boundary to Bellary district along the whole of its north-western side for just over two hundred miles. Hampi, once the capital of the famous Vijayanagar empire, is in Bellary district on the banks of the Tungabhadra.

### Forest

There is little forest in the district in spite of the attempt of the British Government to start a conservancy far back in 1882. The forest was once extensive here, but trees have been recklessly felled in the past and the result is that now only 9.8 per cent of the area is under forest. The generally dry climate and scanty rainfall does not encourage the luxuriant growth of forests. The few trees interspersed with thick grass are subject to summer fires which destroy forest vegetation. A familiar scene to Kshetra people is that of fires raging on small hillocks during summer evenings. The absence of a forest in the vicinity of Kshetra has caused a great shortage of fuel.

The flora of the district is rather limited both in quantity and diversity. The drier eastern parts produce such drought-resisting shrubs as *euphorbias*, *asclepiads* and *acacia arabica-babul*. In the damper western parts various creepers, wild date palms, and the *cassia fistula* (*bilwa*), (sacred to Lord Shiva), are found. Before the Madras Government introduced prohibition in the district the wild date palm was important as a source of liquor, but now the whole of Bellary district is dry. Other common indigenous trees are neem, tamarind, mango, coconut, and yepi.

The fauna includes panthers, leopards, wild boars, black bears and pigs. The larger kinds of game are scarce in the district. Wolves, hyenas, ravine deer, black buck, and rabbits are fairly common in the western taluks. The Indian bustard, partridges, quail,

snipe, pigeons, geese and water fowl are among the game birds in the district. Peafowls are common throughout the western taluks, especially along the banks of the Tungabhadra.

Venomous snakes and scorpions abound in the district. During my stay in Kshetra, a snake was killed every few days. But deaths from snake-bites are rare.

The climate of the region can be classified as follows :

1. The cold season from December to February, when Bellary district is one of the coolest areas in the Deccan plateau.
2. The hot season from March to May when Bellary is one of the hottest parts in the plateau.
3. The rainy season from June to December.

The south-west monsoon lasts from June to the end of September, and the north-east monsoon from October to December giving an average annual rainfall of twenty-three inches to the district, of which nearly 70% falls in the period between June and September. The district is in a dry zone with scanty rainfall. Because of this it suffered more from famine in the past than other parts of the area.

The daily temperature in December ranges from 85.6°F Max., to 60.8°F Min., with a mean of 73.2°F. In May the temperature rises to 102.4°F Max., 77.6°F Min., with a mean of 90°F. The average annual temperature would be 90°F Max., 70°F Min., and 82°F mean.

About the means of communication Major R. Henderson, (Civil engineer in charge of this part of the country : in 1852, wrote : "Roads there are none deserving the name. There are only tracks through some parts marked out by aloe and milk-bush hedges, but from want of bridges and drains these tracks are divided into isolated portions by the rivers that intersect them. At present there is not a single arched bridge throughout the district, though it is intersected by rivers and streams in every direction. The district is actually locked up from the surrounding provinces and without means either for the export of its produce or for the introduction of European articles of commerce."<sup>1</sup>

The road system in Bellary district is still far from being satisfactory, although every major place in the district is now connected with a network of roads. These were partly constructed under a scheme to give relief to certain areas in the district when they were affected by famine during the latter half of the 19th century. Kshetra itself is connected with Bellary, the district headquarters, by one of

1. Francis, W. 1904, *Op. Cit.*, p. 116.

these 'famine roads'. Bellary is 99 miles from Kshetra.

Today Kshetra is served by three buses daily, one from Davangere in Chitradurga district and two from Hospet. Under the management of the District Board the roads were not maintained properly, so much so that it was hardly possible to differentiate between a cart track and a road. During heavy rains, the places normally served by buses could hardly be reached because of unfordable streams or the muddy state of the road surface. In 1960, Kshetra was cut off from buses for nearly ten days in June, and for more than a fortnight during September owing to heavy rains.

Bellary district is fairly well served by the railways. From the railway junction of Guntakal in the Eastern Zone lines radiate to Bombay, Bezwada, Madras, Bangalore and Hubli via Bellary and Hospet. The Southern Railway between Hubli and Bangalore passes by the southern frontier of the district. It is of much service to the southern parts of Harapanahalli, Kudligi and Hadagalli taluks. Kshetra is fifteen miles from Ranebennur, the nearest railway station in Dharwar district.

No navigation is possible along the Tungabhadra as its bed is, for the most part, rocky with deep and sometimes with narrow gorges at such places as Hampi and Honnuru. This also sets limits to fishing in the river. In former times, much timber and bamboo, for use in house-construction, were floated down the river from Shimoga and other areas to Bellary, and this is still done. The country boats ply across the river for nearly nine months in the year, while the river is fordable for three or four months from February to May. Between Harihar in Chitradurga district and Hospet at the other end, no bridge has been built across the river. Plans to build a bridge across the river near Mallahalli in Dharwar district one-and-a-half miles south-west of Kshetra were put into effect in 1960. The foundation stone was laid by a Cabinet Minister of Mysore state during February 1960, and the Government was calling for tenders when I left the field. However, the construction of the bridge is underway and with the completion of this bridge many improvements will no doubt be effected inside and outside the district.

The Tungabhadra forms a natural barrier on the northern and south-western sides of the Bellary district. However, this does not prevent the extreme south-western portion of Bellary district from having trade contracts with Davangere in Chitradurga district, and with Ranebennur and Haveri in Dharwar district. Kshetra has trade connections with the above places. They can all be reached in



a day, while Bellary and Hospet would involve a journey of three to four days by bullock cart. Moreover, they are less important trading centres than Davangere. In the past Bellary district traded more with Bombay and Mysore than with the Madras Presidency. The proximity of the southern and western parts of the district to Mysore state and Bombay Presidency probably encouraged trade connections as well as other links. Only the eastern side of the district had easy access to Madras Presidency, while the south-western areas of the district were at a great distance. The distance proved a deterrent to developing closer contacts with the other areas of the Presidency. In fact distance coupled with other barriers such as lack of easy means of communication and language had a limiting effect on trade and other connections with Madras Presidency.

Until Bellary was incorporated in Mysore state Telugu was the official language in spite of the fact that Kannada was spoken by a majority of the people. In the western taluks nearly 90% of the population speak Kannada. Since the administration was carried on in Telugu, it had obvious repercussions on Kannadigas. Above the level of the village Headman and Accountant, all offices such as the Collector and the Tahsildar were held by non-Kannadigas particularly by Andhras, Tamilians and Europeans. The Government was slow to provide educational facilities and Kannadigas did not take kindly to learning Telugu. The language barrier was buttressed by cultural differences, so that the Government seemed a more or less alien body collecting taxes.

The village officers were required to pass an examination before taking up the job. They had to write the examination in Telugu and later on were required to keep office records in Telugu. This placed them in a favourable position in so far as dealing with the higher officers was concerned. But Kannada was their mother tongue; so most of them were bilingual. The Accountant of Kshetra still mixes Telugu and Kannada words in keeping the village land and crop records. I did not come across anyone in the village talking in Telugu, although a few Kshatriya elders could speak Telugu. The fact that Kshatriyas visit the followers of the cult in Telugu-speaking areas has enabled them to learn Telugu. Apart from the village officers the Kshatriyas always played host to visiting officials in the past, because they could speak Telugu. The incorporation of Bellary district in Mysore state has removed these language and cultural barriers between the people and the Government, but the tradition of Kshatriya-official contact continues. Others still fight shy of ap-

proaching visiting officials:

The educational backwardness of the Kannada-speaking people of the district may be related to lack of facilities and the language barrier before its incorporation with Mysore state. There is only one private college in Bellary and it is now affiliated to the University of Mysore. According to information on the eve of the reorganization of states which took place during November 1956, a total of 12.4% males and 4.6% females are said to be literate in Bellary district. The percentage of literates is lower when compared with other districts in the state. There is not a single graduate from Kshetra although it is a fairly big village. The people of Kshetra admire Guruvathi, a much smaller village, where a good many people are educated.

The District Board runs a primary school in Kshetra and it has six teachers on its staff. It is now being up-graded to include secondary classes. The school with six classes was housed in a rented one room-building. After much effort on the part of the *Panchayat* Board President, a new two-roomed building is under construction, which in due course may be further enlarged.

Hadagalli, whose full name is Hoovina Hadagalli, is one of the four western taluks of the district. The name of the place is said to imply " 'the village of flower boats', the story being that in the days when the city of Vijayanagar was flourishing, flowers for its temples and palaces were floated down the Tungabhadra from this place."<sup>1</sup> Hadagalli taluk is one of the flattest taluks, and has the reputation of being one of the healthiest parts of the district.

### Classification of Soils

Red and mixed soils predominate in Hadagalli taluk, except for a tract in its southern corner comprising nearly a third of its area which is covered with black cotton soil. The soils of Hadagalli have been classified into black (*regada or ere*), mixed (*masab or masari*), and red (*lal or kempu*). Black cotton soil constitutes about 32%, mixed 47%, and red 21% respectively. Black cotton soil is mostly found in the south and north-eastern parts of the taluk. The red and mixed soils vary widely in composition and quality ranging from deep ferruginous loams down to poor varieties consisting entirely of pebbles sometimes larger than eggs.

The first belt of fields surrounding Kshetra in the north and east is pebble-strewn. The soil is poor. After this are red and mixed soils which give way to black soil. On the south, west, and

1. Francis, W. 1904, *Op. Cit.*, p. 24c.

north-western sides there is a small area of mixed soils surrounded by fertile black cotton soil. The Kshetra Linga temple has some six hundred odd acres of inam land, most of which is black cotton soil. The temple trustee looks after the land which is inalienable and this fact is important in understanding local social relations. The rich Lingayat peasants who could otherwise afford to accumulate land have no opportunity of extending their estates as the temple inam lands are unsaleable. By setting limits to aspiring individuals, the temple land serves to increase the tension between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas.<sup>1</sup>

Sorghum or *jowar* is the staple crop. It is not only valuable as food, but its stalk is said to be excellent food for milch cows. Next comes *korra* (*Panicum Italicum*), and *cambu*; small quantities of wheat and paddy are also grown. A variety of pulses—greengram, horsegram, *niger* (*gurellu*)—and vegetables, chillies and onions are raised mainly for local consumption. Sesamum and castor are also grown.

Cotton and groundnuts are the main cash crops while a little tobacco is also grown. There is no mention of groundnuts in the Gazetteer of 1904 and they have been introduced in the last 3 or 4 decades. Some of my informants correlated the steadily increasing price of jowar to the expansion of groundnut cultivation and the corresponding shrinkage of jowar land. A peasant would choose to raise only groundnut in his fields and buy jowar in the market. I am told that in Harapanahalli and other taluks also growing groundnuts is preferred to growing jowar. The spread of cash crops and a market economy has awakened the ambitions of the Lingayat peasants of Kshetra, but their ability to accumulate more land is limited by the temple inam lands under the control of the Kshatriyas. The Lingayats would like to take over the temple land and raise cash crops on it. But so long as the lands are inalienable and are under Kshatriya control, they have no opportunity to possess the temple land.

The following are the details of figures of crops for Kshetra and two subsidiary hamlets,<sup>2</sup> for the agricultural year 1958-59.

In the beginning of the century there was a little irrigation from the channels of Tungabhadra *anicut* in and around Hospet.

1. Parvathamamma, C. "Land-holding Pattern and Power-Relations in a Mysore Village", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1968.

2. For details refer to p. 27.



The development of the Tungabhadra Project near Hospet-Munirabad in the 1950's has greatly extended irrigation facilities in the district and in Andhra Pradesh. A power house has been erected near the

TABLE I  
Acreage of Major Crops in Kshetra

			Acres	—Cents
Jowar	...	...	1339	— 11
Cotton	...	...	806	— 42
Groundnut	...	...	523	— 52
Greengram	...	...	194	— 39
Bengalgram ( <i>Madike</i> )	...	...	110	— 68
Horsegram	...	...	107	— 92
Subsidiary crops ( <i>Panicum Italicum</i> , Vegetables, chillies and so forth.)	...	...	275	— 75
			3357	— 79
Note : Total cultivable land . . . . .			3573	— 46
Total cultivated land . . . . .			3357	— 79
		Fallow	215	— 67

project, and there is a scheme to supply hydro-electric power to both Mysore and Andhra states. Since 1950, large tracts of land have come under irrigation, growing paddy and sugarcane. There are two sugar factories at Kampli and Hospet, and a third was begun during 1960.

Irrigation has not yet reached Hadagalli taluk. The Tungabhadra, though perennial, is of little use for irrigation purposes on its long course, except where it is harnessed by erecting a dam across it. As it enters the district, it flows between high banks of red loam, and lower down much of its bed is deep and the banks usually fall sharply down to the river. These factors have proved strong deterrents to the use of river water for irrigation purposes till now. It is only quite recently and still on an experimental basis that people have begun installing power machinery to draw water from the river for irrigation.

Electricity reaches Kshetra from Kanchur, a village 15 miles distant, and is used for street and house-lighting and for working flour mills. It is also being utilised to install pumps to draw water from the river for irrigation purposes. The porosity of the black soil, and the irregular and scanty rainfall, often threaten the

peasants with the hazards of drought and failure of crops. As an insurance against this, and for the optimum exploitation of the available land, the need for irrigation from river water is increasingly felt by the peasants in Kshetra. Eight irrigation pump sets were installed in Kshetra during 1960. They were working intermittently, for people were still building rooms to house them. Most of the structures erected to install them were washed away during the 1959 floods when the river rose above its banks and damaged even the bridge near Harihar.

Bellary district possesses few tanks, while the use of well water for cultivation is not much developed. The district has very few wells and the cotton soil taluks of the west still fewer. It was disclosed in the Mysore Legislature during 1960 that there are well over six hundred villages in the new state which do not possess even a single well. Guruvathi on the banks of the Tungabhadra was one of them.

People explain why well water for irrigation is scarcely used in this area in the following manner. When a river runs near the village, the water-table is generally lower than elsewhere, and it may be necessary to dig down sixty or seventy feet to reach it. The water from a single well could only irrigate about four to five acres of land. But the expenses of working it make it unprofitable. Secondly, the cotton soil does not take kindly to irrigation. The sub-soil lies at a greater depth and beneath the stratum of limestone which so often underlies black soil, so that when reached, the water is too brackish to be of much use, and certainly not fit for drinking. Also the wells, when dug in this loose black soil, have to be expensively rivetted or lined with stones to keep their sides from falling in. Most farmers were unable to afford this. So Kshetra has no wells for effective irrigation so far, whereas Kolalu, which is further away from the river, employs well water extensively for cultivation. They raise cash crops such as vegetables, fruits, betel leaves and a little sugarcane on the irrigated land. In fact, Kshetra depends for its daily vegetable supply on Kolalu. Some nine or ten people from Kolalu come daily to Kshetra to sell vegetables for cash and kind.

Kshetra has about fourteen wells in the village, all at a great depth. Except for one or two, the water in them is brackish. The well water is used for cattle, washing and cleaning and other general household purposes, while most of the villagers fetch water from the river for drinking purposes.

The 'plough' cattle are an important and indispensable item in both wet and dry cultivation in India. During January 1960 Kshetra had the following stock.

TABLE II

Live Stock in Kshetra		
Oxen	...	360
Cows	...	293, Calves 213
Buffaloes	...	180, Calves 71
Sheep	...	370
Goats	...	240

The stock raised within the district is of very low quality. It consists of cows, oxen, buffaloes, sheep and goats, and no attention is paid to proper breeding. There is no bull in Kshetra, nor are people used to the idea of artificial insemination, as there are no veterinary hospitals in the vicinity. Only the buffalo calves are cared for, while bull-buffalo calves are not cared for when young and are allowed to die. Bull-buffalo calves have neither economic value nor ritual value, as they are not used in cultivation and are also not sacrificed to village deities. Kshetra peasants make trips to Davangere and Rithi in Dharwar district to buy 'plough' cattle of better quality. They also buy them in the cattle fair held annually during March at Guruvathi.<sup>1</sup>

Kshetra is a border village in the south-west corner of Hadagalli taluk. It is situated at 14.8° N. latitude, 75.42° E longitude and at an altitude of 596 feet above sea level. It is a mile distant from the Tungabhadra, one of the major South Indian rivers.

Kshetra, together with Ambarahalli and Tanda, two hamlets situated at three and three-and-a-half miles to the north-east, form one administrative unit. Each hamlet had a separate Headman while a single Accountant was in charge of all the three. Mysore Government regulations of 1960 made these hamlets elect their representatives to work hand in hand with Kshetra Panchayat Board members. Accordingly, two members came from Ambarahalli and one from Tanda. The move to constitute a common Panchayat Board strengthened the administrative units further.

1. Francis, W. 1904, *Op. Cit.* p. 245, states in the *District Gazetteer* that a cattle fair used to be held annually in Kshetra also. This seems to be incorrect; probably Francis mistook the movement of stock between these two places and referred to a cattle fair as being held in Kshetra as well.



A total of about 4087 acres is held among these three, of which 3573 acres is dry cultivable land. For the purposes of this study attention is focussed on Kshetra and the hamlets are ignored. In the beginning of January 1960, Kshetra had a population of 1,929, with 358 households, representing some eighteen castes. The details of population and landholding based on the census data are laid out in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
Population and Landholding in Kshetra

Caste	Sub-Caste	No. of House- holds	Popu- lation	Per- cen- tage	Own Acres Cents	Per- cen- tage.
<b>A. Veerasaivas.</b>						
1.	(i) Lingayat Panchachara	133	734	38.0	1405 43	57.8
	(ii) „ Banajiga	16	73	3.8	86 —	7.4
	(iii) „ Sadaru	8	38	2.0	47 —	
	(iv) „ Shiva Simpiga	4	35	1.8	32 —	
	(v) „ Hande Rahuta	1	5	.3	— —	
2.	„ Jangam	6	27	1.4	14 —	
3.	„ Barber	2	15	.7	— —	
4.	„ Potter	1	5	.3	2 —	
<b>B. Non-Lingayats.</b>						
5.	Kuruba	57	281	14.6	334 50	13.7
6.	Maratha	13	69	3.6	28 —	1.2
7.	Barike	19	101	5.2	74 5	3.1
8.	Sethi Banajiga	3	17	.8	16 —	.7
9.	Pinjari	4	28	1.5	37 —	1.5
10.	Muslim	3	13	.7	— —	—
11.	Talawari	13	104	5.4	49 37	2.0
12.	Agasa (Washerman)	9	40	2.1	4 —	.2
<b>C. Twice-Born.</b>						
13.	Brahmin	4	18	.9	59 —	2.4
14.	Kshatriya	9	63	3.3	62 50	6.7
15.	Viswakarma	14	76	4.0	44 34	1.8
<b>D. Untouchables.</b>						
16.	Madiga	28	147	7.6	8 25	.4
17.	Kanchaveera	7	22	1.1	22 —	.9
18.	Cheluvadi	4	18	.9	6 —	.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>358</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2431 44</b>	<b>100%</b>

The size and population of villages in Bellary area seem to vary considerably. For instance, Kolalu, three miles north of Kshetra, contained about a thousand houses and more than three thousand people. In contrast, Guruvathi a mile-and-a-half to the south-east of Kshetra, had just under two hundred houses, and a little over one thousand people. A comparison of the size and population of Kshetra with that of Srinivas's Rampura<sup>1</sup>, or Epstein's Wangala and Dalena<sup>2</sup>, would make Kshetra an unusually big village. Rampura has 281 houses with 1,523 people while Wangala and Dalena have 192 and 153 houses with 958 and 707 inhabitants respectively. Epstein regards Wangala as quite a big village for that area. The size and population of Kshetra alone is slightly larger than both Wangala and Dalena put together. Kshetra more resembles Dube's Shamirpet<sup>3</sup>, a village in Andhra. Shamirpet with 342 houses and 1,821 people constitutes one administrative unit with the two hamlets of Babuguda and Upparapalli, with 673 souls living in 166 houses. I am more inclined to think that Kshetra is an average-sized village for the fertile black cotton soil areas of the Deccan plateau.

### The Pattern of Residence and the History of the Village

It was said by Francis in 1904 that "A hundred years ago a Bellary village was almost always fortified. Traces of the enclosing stone walls and the circular watch-towers still usually survive and near the ruined gates often stands a shrine to Hanuman, who guards the inhabitants from harm. Without such defences the place would have been at the mercy of the robbers and irregular cavalry, while with them showers of stones were sufficient weapons. The necessity of living within the fortifications caused the houses to be very closely crowded together and in many villages there are only one or two streets which are wide enough to admit an ordinary country cart and the other thoroughfares are tortuous lanes.....Except the Madigas, all castes lived in close proximity."<sup>4</sup>

This seems to be an apt description which is applicable to Kshetra. To-day, it is only the Madigas who live in an exclusive colony, the details of which appear in the sketch map of the village. In the past Kshetra was a fortified village. One of my Brahmin

1. Srinivas, M.N., 1955, *The Social System of a Mysore Village*.
2. Epstein, T.S., 1962, *Economic Development and Social Change in South India*.
3. Dube S.C., 1955, *Indian Village*.
4. Francis, W. 1904. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 57-8.

informants told me how the entire village—a handful of houses to begin with—was huddled together in and around the temple premises which themselves were fortified, while the compactness of the houses was calculated to increase the defensibility of the village against external raiders.

There were two gates to the village, one to the east and another to the south. After nightfall, the village Headman and the watchman used to lock the gates. Although no traces of the wall or the gates is discernible today, people still refer to the east gate as '*Kallagase*' and the south gate as '*Mannagase*' as being respectively made of stone and mud, and the stone wall having heavy wooden doors. Once the gates were closed nobody could go out until the next morning when they were opened by the village officers concerned. Probably there was a permanent night watchman, or perhaps households kept watch in turn.

There was a little black stone in the earth which I was shown as marking the spot where the '*Mannagase*' stood in former times. Even today people put vermilion and pour oil over this stone in reverence. The village gate, called '*agase*' in the vernacular (although in some Mysore villages it is more a concept than a fact), is always looked upon with reverence all over South India. The village gate is like the front door of a house. Once people are inside the house (village) they are safe. Hence the gate and front door are associated with a guardian spirit.

Certain festivals or ceremonies either start or end as one reaches the village gate. For instance, a certain Hindu festival called '*Karuhunnime*' (Monsoon Full Moon) is celebrated during May-June each year, an important part of which consists in driving decorated oxen through the village gate. The gate itself is decorated with a mango and neemleaf festoon. The first man who drives his oxen through the gate is also expected to tear the festoon to pieces. This is known as tearing the festoon during the full moon of *Karuhunnime* (*Karuhunnime Karehariyuvudu*). This is no longer confined to old '*agase*' in Kshetra since the village has expanded considerably. I shall try to account below for the expansion of the village which came about towards the end of eighteenth century.

While dictating their genealogies several informants referred to their ancestors who lived in *Kallagase* or *Mannagase* about four or five generations ago. This means that quite a few people in addition to Kshatriyas were accommodated within the fortified temple compound. There is one Hanuman temple nearby in a dilapidated



condition, and another fairly large Hanuman temple outside Mannagase. These two temples appear on the village sketch map. My guess is that the large Hanuman temple may have been built with the expansion of the village. The immigrants who moved to Kshetra may have erected one temple to commemorate their migration. Further I am inclined to think that Kallagase and Mannagase indicate different materials used in their construction rather than implying a kind of social polarisation between people with different social values.

The expansion of Kshetra might have come about by the merger of hamlets in its neighbourhood. There is evidence to show that the four villages of Somalapura, Mallapura, Ramapura and Malapura were made over to the ancestors of the present Kshatriya owners of the temple as early as 1788, by Sadar Sahib of Ranebennur (refer to Map 2B for the position of Kshetra in relation to these four hamlets). The record lists some of the donations<sup>1</sup> made to the temple, but it is likely that it was a device to protect the local people living in the four unfortified hamlets against attacks from outsiders by concentrating them in a single fortified village. It was specified in the 'gift deed', that part of the revenue collected from the hamlets should be remitted to Sadar Sahib and the remaining amount should be used to maintain the temple. Thus the financial factor seems to have determined the nature of the movement to a large extent. Immigrants were welcomed to Kshetra since they paid taxes and, therefore, had the right to seek protection against external raiders.

Since the temple proprietors held the right to collect revenue, the people from the hamlets could not evade payment either by not moving into Kshetra or by going elsewhere as long as they held some landed property. It naturally follows that the inhabitants moved into Kshetra and paid the taxes to the Kshatriyas. The fact that they paid tax to the Kshatriyas may have created grounds for discontentment. It is possible to speculate that this may have eventually led to conflict and rivalry. The tax-collectors and tax-payers, a numerically insignificant Kshatriyas and a large Lingayat community, found themselves in opposition which was gradually sharpened by the religious cleavage between them.

At present traces of the four extinct hamlets are found in their dilapidated Hanuman temples. Those people whose fields are close to one of these Hanuman temples worship the deity on special occasions.

1. For details see 'Founding of the Temple'.

It is less likely that a particular field has been owned by a family over generations. But the owner of the field whoever he be, certainly participates in the worship of the deity. The chief period of worshipping at these Hanuman temples usually occurs before the drought. People of the surrounding fields get together, irrespective of caste, contribute money or grain, participate in a propitiatory ceremony and have a communal dinner.

During August-September 1960, at least two parties arranged propitiatory worship near the Hanuman temple of the extinct hamlets. The Lingayats and the Kuruba cultivators organized the ceremony. The non-Lingayats and Untouchables who form the bulk of agricultural labourers gave contributions and also participated in the celebrations. The ritual importance of these Hanuman temples in the lives of the people of Kshetra continues even after the extinction of the hamlets themselves. The Hanuman temples link the past with the present and remind the people of their obligations to the deities if people tend to neglect them. Thus are held the periodic propitiatory ceremonies which emphasize the significance of the deities for the welfare of the people.

### House Structure

"The average Bellary village is a dismal dust-coloured, unlovely affair."<sup>1</sup> The small rectangular houses are not unlike forts on a small scale. The walls of the houses are generally of rough stone in mud, and the roof is nearly always made of flat earth. Faggots and a foot or so of mud are piled on the horizontal rafters and coated outside with clay. Since the ceiling is not plastered, it proves a breeding place for bedbugs, and often snakes glide and disappear into the hallows of bamboos which are used as rafters. These houses are called '*Malige*' in Kannada. In these houses light and ventilation are secured by making a hole in the roof and fixing in this hole the neck of a broken pot. This hole is covered with another pot during rains so as to prevent rain water pouring into the house. In heavy rains these roofs leak, and in summer it is very uncomfortable to sleep in them. The outer side of the walls of the houses are normally decorated with locally available red earth, while the interior of the walls are usually whitewashed.

People do not use tiles to cover the roofs of the houses. So tiles are not manufactured locally. Informants expressed the view that the existing *Malige* type of houses are enduring and less expen-

1. Francis, W. 1904. *Op. Cit.*, p. 58.

sive. They thought that a tiled house would be costlier and need constant replacing of broken tiles. The absence of necessary clay to manufacture tiles, lack of firewood to bake them, and the supposed high velocity of wind, were offered as alternative explanations as to why tiled houses are not popular in the area. It is a rare thing to find a tiled house in the area, and in Kshetra the 'rest house' was the only place in the village covered with factory made tiles.

The village has been able to build an attractive rest house. Apart from its novelty it is very convenient for visiting officials, who prefer to camp in the rest house because it is somewhat remote from the village but not too far. Even officials touring in the surrounding areas come to Kshetra if they have to camp overnight. The constitution of the V.P.B., with a Kshatriya President since 1949 is said to have been responsible for the many-sided improvements effected in this village. The rest house, post office, school building, electrification of the village, improvement of the village streets and attempts to build roads within the village—all these have been achieved by the statutory Panchayat because of much hard work on the part of the President. By the same token it has greatly enlarged the range of Kshatriya contacts with officials.

The location of Kshetra and a brief reference to its ecology are only preliminary steps in an attempt to account for the Kshatriya-Lingayat relationship here. The political, economic and social changes which came about in the Deccan in the past, and the recent political changes in India and Mysore state, are reflected in the history of the village.

### Outline of the Theme

The Kshatriyas have always had official contacts. These have helped them to maintain their status and assume political dominance in the village. But this situation has led to increased opposition by the Lingayats who resent Kshatriya dominance. Hence they opposed the President's party in the elections. The Lingayats constitute about 20% i.e. the largest single caste-group in new Mysore state. The Lingayats dominate the political scene of the state. The Lingayats of Kshetra are increasingly showing a desire to be politically dominant in their village also. Competition for political power in recent years has tended to rouse caste consciousness among the Lingayats.

The Lingayats of Kshetra seem always to have been caste conscious in their struggle against the Kshatriyas. But the emphasis



is placed on different aspects of their relationship at different times in the history of the village and the Kshatriya controlled temple.

As suggested earlier, the relationship between Kshatriya tax-collectors and Lingayat tax-payers may have sowed the seeds of discontent. The advent of British administration in 1800, and the subsequent land reforms, deprived the Kshatriyas of this power they had once enjoyed. This led to a steady rise in the power of the Lingayats. The economic opportunities which British rule offered were duly taken advantage of by the Lingayats of Kshetra. They included individual ownership of land, the introduction of cash crops and business and commercial contacts outside the village. All these helped the Lingayats to become economically dominant. The Kshatriyas even claim that they once owned the village that all the lands were under their control and that they enjoyed many other privileges. The British Government introduced various reforms in the village and this affected the Kshatriya position and deprived them of much of their former power. The Kshatriyas adjusted themselves to these changes and were content to retain only ownership of the temple and control over its land.

The Kshatriyas were able to assert and maintain their status through the temple cult, and by assuming leadership over the followers of the cult outside the village. The followers of the cult coming from a variety of castes submitted to the religious (also caste rules) and political adjudications of the Kshatriyas. The rift between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats widened so much that they became rival groups. The first attempt of the Lingayats to take over the Kshatriya-controlled temple and its economic resources was made at the turn of the century. Since the deity in the temple is one of the several manifestations of Shiva and Lingayats as worshippers of Shiva in particular, they put forward a religious claim to the Kshatriya-controlled temple. The administrators who came to arbitrate over the dispute upheld the Kshatriya claim to proprietorship of the temple.

The confirmation of their proprietorship of the temple offered the Kshatriyas fresh opportunities for contacts with officials because the temple came under official supervision. Contacts with officials and the religious impact of the temple on the people have led to Kshatriya political dominance. With this change has come a change in Lingayat strategy. They are aspiring after political power, and are no longer interested only in the economic resources of the temple as in the past. The temple has become a symbol of political dominance through its religious appeal. The Lingayats resent the

religious sway of the temple which has increased Kshatriya political dominance.

The office of the temple trustee is held by a senior Kshatriya. His younger brother has been the Panchayat Board President since the inception of the office in 1949. Thus secular politics is buttressed by temple politics and vice-versa. In their attempt to sever secular politics from temple politics, Lingayats are increasingly becoming conscious of the strength and status of their caste.

The temple politics and village secular politics which has been discussed in the second part of the book will disclose the nature of the Kshatriya-Lingayat rivalry. The pressure exerted by the Lingayats, in fact, has led the Kshatriyas to give up some of the ritual roles, which they used to play in the village and in the temple cult. This has also encouraged the Kshatriyas to look for support from outsiders—pilgrims, followers of the cult, and administrators—who help the Kshatriyas to maintain their status. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will highlight the nature of the support given to the Kshatriyas by outsiders. Lingayat contact with outsiders in the past, especially with members of their own caste, induced them to emphasize the differences between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas. Now such contacts are sending up a new wave of caste-consciousness. The impact of wider economic and social changes could be traced in both these groups in Kshetra.

Caste consciousness of the Lingayats is partly explicable in the light of the fact that Veerasaivism is a sectarian and anti-Brahmanical movement. During the twelfth century, Basava and his followers won many converts to Veerasaivism. They expounded and preached the tenets of the sect to masses of people in the vernacular. The movement gained strength as people were able to understand the tenets, and the preachers converted people from other castes to Veerasaivism. Conversion from different castes to Veerasaivism gave rise to internal structural differentiation among Veerasaivas, so that today, Veerasaiva castes and sub-castes form a hierarchy. The Veerasaivas of Kshetra so far have never united against the Kshatriyas. The hierarchy among the Veerasaivas partly explains this disunity and this is discussed in the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism.

The Kshatriyas have retained much of their political dominance because of the underlying disunity among the Veerasaivas. But there is something more which accounts for the success of the Kshatriyas. This, as I have indicated earlier is connected with the



temple cult, its regional spread drawing followers from many castes and also the increased Kshatriya-official contact both in temple as well as village administration. All these factors have made a major contribution to the consolidating of the position and status of the Kshatriyas. The continued Kshatriya dominance in the village is a result of these wider contacts and the influence of socio-political factors in the Deccan region. In recent years as well as for some time past, changes outside Kshetra are similarly affecting the Lingayats. The Lingayats are gradually drawn towards these forces outside the village to consider their strength and weaknesses as against the Kshatriyas.

The temple cult with its emphasis on agricultural rites has among its followers many occupational groups which have no particular bias towards Veerasaivism. This acts as a deterrent to the Lingayats. Sectarianism and caste patriotism cannot always outweigh the traditional belief in the overriding importance of agriculture and the beneficence of a cult which revolves around agricultural rites. Participation in the temple cult implies the suspension of sectarian and caste interests. At this level, the temple is to be seen as a unifying force. However short-lived this unity may be, it ensures Kshatriya leadership of the cult. According to Leach, the solidarity achieved by the participating groups in religious rituals, "need exist only at the moment at which the ritual takes place ; we cannot infer a continuing latent solidarity after the ritual celebrations are over."<sup>1</sup> This is applicable to the Lingayats' participation in the Kshetra Linga temple rituals.

In the first part of the book, I shall analyse the structure of the caste as exhibited in the local hierarchy. This discussion points to the religious dichotomy between the twice-born and the Veerasaivas. A detailed account of this divergence, and the internal structural differentiation among the Veerasaivas supported by the history of the sect, forms the theme of the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism.

Sectarian and caste interests cannot deprive the Kshatriyas of their ownership of the temple and leadership of the cult. An analysis of the founding of the temple and temple cult with its three major festivals centered around agricultural rites, will account for the success of the Kshatriyas in maintaining, and the failure of the Lingayats in securing, control of the temple. Success and failure re-emphasize the basic religious dichotomy between the two :

1. Leach E.R. 1959, *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, p. 281.



the orthodox and the rebellious sectarian caste. The starting point could, therefore, be seen as the end and vice-versa, both buttressed by the social forces at work in the region. The chapter on stratification will form the starting point in accounting for this dichotomy, which is not confined to the physical boundaries of the village. The mutual influence and interdependence between the village and the region covers almost every aspect of social life. Changes at upper levels affected the village social structure and influenced the local socio-political relationship to a great extent.

### CHAPTER III

## THE VILLAGE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

THE RANK ordering of castes in a hierarchy is based on several criteria. The classification of castes based on a number of factors—variables—also accounts for the stability of the hierarchy in an area. First it consists of one's membership in a caste, i.e., the fact of birth with an ascriptive value. The Western class society is primarily based upon economic factors and classes are 'status groups'. But the Indian castes are generally not status groups in the Western sense.

The two most important criteria adopted in the classification of castes or their structural arrangement, are ritual status and commensality. The 'attributional' and 'inter-actional' theories of caste ranking<sup>1</sup> refer only to the ritual status and commensal relationships that exist between given caste-groups. Both are important while attempting to determine the relative status of caste in a hierarchy. Usually they go together, but occasionally they may be found to vary i.e., the ritual status need not be a hindrance to commensality or the kind of food that one eats. We have the Brahmanical model of vegetarianism and teetotalism. There is a contradiction in the 'traditional attributes' of the Brahmin caste, with reference to meat eating Bengali and Kashmiri Brahmins, while the Saraswath Brahmins eat fish.<sup>2</sup> So also the Brahmins of Orissa<sup>3</sup>

1. Marriott, M. 1959, 'Interactional and Attributional Theories of Caste Ranking'. *Man in India* Vol. 39. No. 2 pp. 92-107.
2. Hutton, J.H. 1961, *Caste in India*, See Chapter 6.
3. Bailey, F.G. See his book, *Caste and the Economic Frontier*.

enjoy the highest ritual status but they eat goat meat.

The hierarchical arrangement of castes is bound up with a number of variables, of which as pointed out earlier, ritual status and commensality are two important factors. The categorization of castes using only these two factors, and an attempt to arrange them in a hierarchy, are again bound up with the local situation. Generalizations on this score are not impossible, but they become more difficult when removed from the local situation in an attempt to apply them elsewhere. There is a general agreement—although it is an oversimplified one—among Indianists that the Brahmins invariably occupy the top rank and the Untouchables the bottom rank of the hierarchy. The nature of the data from Kshetra necessitates a modification of this generalization. The ladder-like hierarchy branches into two at the top and they run parallel in relation to a number of castes below them. The position of caste-groups in the hierarchy appear in Chart I. below.

### CHART I

#### Approximate Hierarchical position of Caste-groups in Kshetra

##### A. *Twice-born*

1. Brahmin
2. Kshatriya
3. Viswakarma or Panchala
  - (a) Blacksmith
  - (b) Carpenter
  - (c) Goldsmith

##### B. *Veerasaivas*

4. Jangam
5. (a) Lingayat Panchachara
  - (b) Banajiga
  - (c) Hande Rahuta
  - (d) Shiva Simpiga
  - (e) Sadaru
6. Potter
7. Barber

##### C. *Non-Lingayats.*

8. Kuruba
9. Maratha
10. Setti Banajiga
11. Barike
12. Muslim (non-Hindu Castes)
13. Pinjari   "   "   "
14. Talawari
15. Washermen (Agasa or Madiwala)

##### D. *Untouchables*

16. Cheluvadi
17. Kanchaveera
18. Madiga

The high-caste Hindu groups which compete with each other for



rank do so by forming partly exclusive ritual associations and by not accepting cooked food from each other. In Kshetra, the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas form two competing groups. Both sets of castes accept vegetarianism and teetotalism as ideals. Many of the theoretical principles which account for sharp divisiveness between castes do not obtain in practice. For instance the Twice-born and the Lingayats as groups competing for equal rank do not interdine in principle. But this is often overlooked. This means that caste groups are not too sharply distinguished especially with regard to commensal and ritual status. This will become clear when the social structure in Kshetra is discussed.

The position of a caste in the hierarchy depends upon positive and negative attributes. Those on the positive side refer to the castes with whom it accepts food and ritual services, interdines and stands on a footing of equality. In Kshetra only the Panchala sub-castes (No. 3) constitute such a hierarchy.

In contrast to the positive, the negative aspect involves a caste's refusal to accept food from another caste, although it may accept its ritual services. In Kshetra, the Twice-born and the Veerasaiva caste-groups exhibit the negative aspect in relation to non-Lingayats and Untouchables. The Twice-born and the Veerasaivas accept ritual services from the non-Lingayat and Untouchable caste groups, but do not accept cooked food from them. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. The barber serves all castes, excluding the Untouchables, on both normal and ritual occasions. But no caste in the village, not even the Untouchables, accept food from the barber. Since the positive and the negative aspects determine the relative position of a caste in the hierarchy, a brief description of all caste-groups is of relevance here.

All castes have ritualistic, economic and political roles, which make them interdependent. In these roles some castes appear as first-class members of the community, while others constitute second-class members. Despite these differences, all people irrespective of caste are members of the village. If ritualistic and economic roles confirm the interdependence of castes, political participation depends upon a number of variables, especially so with the village council—the statutory Panchayat—based on the principle of universal adult suffrage.

Ritualistic, economic and political roles characterise the interdependence of castes. There obtains an inverse relation between these roles, so that, the castes rendering ritual services tend to be subordinate to castes which receive them; and the latter are often economically

and politically dominant. The patron-client relationship is frequently buttressed by ritual services. Payment in kind constitutes the core of the patron-client relationship, whereas a ceremonial fee often marks ritual services. The patron-client relationship is strengthened by ritual services, and payment in kind often makes for an enduring interpersonal relationship. Mere ritual ties need not lead to enduring interdependence of castes, although they become commensurate with economic reward. Ritual roles could be assumed by any qualified member of an appropriate caste. There is no way of enforcing them as rights on people receiving them. Domestic priesthood comes partly under this category. Later on I will substantiate this with reference to Jangams and Lingayats. The core of the economic, political and ritual interdependence of castes expresses itself in the patron-client relationship which is stabilized by payment in kind.<sup>1</sup>

The ranking of castes within Kshetra cannot be reduced to fit into the over-simplified, all-India concept of *Varna*, with its four grades : Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, with Brahmins at the top and Untouchables at the bottom of the hierarchy. The ranking, especially of the middle castes and the number of variables that have to be reckoned with, make the hierarchical arrangement somewhat arbitrary. Although the hierarchy is usually influenced by local factors such as the numerical strength, land owned, and so forth, it is not always decisive.

The regional variation is much more pronounced in Kshetra. As observed in the beginning, there is a cleavage among high caste Hindu in Kshetra. The Veerasaivas as a group form a party contending for superiority with the Brahmins. We have the Twice-born on one side and the Veerasaivas on the other. In relation to these two major divisions all other castes rank below in terms of hierarchy based on ritual status and commensal rules.

The ranking of castes based on ritual status and commensal relations is again said to obtain between castes of equal rank, the ritually lower castes accepting food from the ritually higher castes. The Veerasaivas of Kshetra are an exception to this general dictum. The Jangams, who form the priestly caste, naturally enjoy ritual superiority among Veerasaivas. But the Jangams interdine with all Lingayats with the exception of barbers.

The concept of spatial distance and the practice of untouchability

1. Parvatham, C. 1969 "The Logic and Limits of Tradition and Economy in Village India, *Indian Journal of Social Research*, April, 1969, Vol. X No. 1, pp. 55-70."



are reduced to a minimum in the Kshetra.

In the course of discussing the caste hierarchy, I shall discuss the factors that make for flexibility in the system. In doing this, towards the end, I shall outline the various activities which have a close bearing on daily life. At this level, the endogamy of caste-groups emerges as the single dominant feature which keeps group structures more or less clearly defined.

Some eighteen castes with sub-castes amongst themselves are represented in the Kshetra. I will use the term 'caste-group' to include both the caste as well as the sub-castes within it. The term 'Lingayat' will be used in a general sense to include the five sub-castes under division five, and the terms potter and barber will be used similarly in so far as they profess 'Veerasaivism' by accepting ritual services only from a Jangam and interdining only with the Lingayats. The term 'Veerasaiva' will include all Lingayats and the priestly caste of Jangams.<sup>1</sup> However, I shall refer to the five sub-castes under division five as Lingayats, but retain the terms and refer to Jangam, Lingayat, potter and barber as they are. The term 'non-Lingayat' would include the two non-Hindu castes. The two non-Hindu castes fit in with commensal rules, although their ritual observances are different from those of the Hindus. I will use 'Viswakarma' and 'Panchala' as interchangeable terms to denote the five artisan castes.

I begin my discussion of the hierarchy with the Twice-born castes, and go on to deal with the Veerasaivas, bringing out the major differences between the two groups. The order of treatment of the castes at this stage is for the sake of convenience and does not necessarily indicate the priority or superiority of one over the other. For example, number one is Brahmin and four is Jangam. This does not mean that Jangams stand three places down from the

1. McCormack, W. 1963. 'Lingayats as a Sect' in *JRAI* Vol. 93 part I, pp. 59-71.

The author draws a distinction between Veerasaivism and Lingayatism on the following lines: the term 'Veerasaiva' as applicable to the religiously defined group *i.e.*, for the group of devotees (Bhaktas) and in wider extension, as referring to the aggregate of the members of all local congregations headed, or served, by Lingayat religious specialists. The term 'Lingayat' indicates a socially defined group. The group constituted by the linga-wearing vegetarians and in its larger sense can be identified as a caste.

Although the distinction between the 'religious' and 'social' factors appear to be useful for purposes of analysis, it is difficult to point out where the one begins and the other ends; they frequently overlap. The ritual services of a Jangam are available also to non-linga-wearing and non-vegetarian castes such as Kurubas, Marathas and even Untouchables. But a particular ritual act known as 'Karunaprasada' is exclusively undertaken in Lingayat households. I am inclined to use 'Veerasaivism' and 'Lingayatism' as synonymous terms in the popular sense.



Brahmins. The Veerasaiva group as such is equal but opposed to the Twice-born group. The non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes are different from the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas. The Twice-born and the Veerasaivas run parallel in relation to the non-Lingayats and the Untouchables. The numerical order of castes among non-Lingayats and Untouchables also implies their place in the hierarchy.

### 1. The Twice-born : Brahmin, Kshatriya and Panchala

The Brahmins of Kshetra belong to the Saivite section i.e., Smartha division. They are vegetarians and teetotallers. They do not interdine with any other caste in the village, while the Kshatriyas, non-Lingayats and Untouchables accept food from their hands. The members of one Brahmin family are engaged as priests in the Kshetra Linga temple, and they act as domestic priests to the Kshatriyas, Marathas and indirectly (to be elaborated later, see pp. 74 below) to Setti Banajigas.

Temple priesthood and domestic priesthood are somewhat different. In domestic priesthood, among Brahmins, there is a further division of roles connected with different life-crises ceremonies which may not be undertaken by the same person. For instance, a Brahmin priest who directs mortuary rites may not conduct a wedding. However, I postpone discussing the roles of a Brahmin domestic priest on 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' occasions until I analyse the Jangam priesthood among the Veerasaivas.

All other castes in the village consult the Brahmin for astrological calculations about the sowing season, birth, death, wedding and so on, and they pay him cash. All the servicing castes—the carpenter, blacksmith, barber, washermen and madiga—render professional as well as ritual services to Brahmins and are paid in kind.

The Kshatriyas of Kshetra belong to '*Surya Vamsha*' (sun line), and form a patrilineage. They profess vegetarianism and teetotalism. They accept food and ritual services from Brahmins. All non-Lingayats and Untouchables accept cooked food from them, while the servicing castes render them professional and ritual services.

The Kshatriyas are the proprietors of the Kshetra Linga temple. This has involved them in a change of their traditional role. They have become heads of the cult of Kshetra Linga. This is a deviation from the traditional occupation of fighting. Change of norms has

brought about further changes. Kshatriyas have assumed religious leadership—*guruship*—over the multi-caste followers of the cult coming from different places. In this capacity, they also minister to the customs and traditions (*Achar Vichara*) of the castes of their followers. They bestow certain emblems among devotees who seek to serve the deity in a particular manner. They are the spiritual teachers (*gurus*) of the local Untouchable caste of Kanchaveeras, while they themselves accept the Brahmin head of the famous Sringeri Mutt, founded by Sri Shankaracharya, as their spiritual teacher.

The Kshatriyas as founders and proprietors of the local temple form one of the 'dominant' castes in the village. Elsewhere I have suggested that these Kshatriyas are descended from the Vijayanagar royal family which ruled over parts of the Karnatak area between 1336-1565. After the collapse of the Vijayanagar empire, the members of the royal family including the Kshatriyas of Kshetra, seem to have been scattered over different places in South India.

The religious authority acquired through the cult of the Kshetra Linga temple and the political dominance enjoyed by the Kshatriyas have long been envied by the Veerasaivas of Kshetra, as well as by Veerasaivas coming from the surrounding villages. The Veerasaivas of Kshetra form a single 'dominant' caste with many sub-castes amongst themselves. Land is concentrated in their hands and an educated class is about to emerge amongst them. Kshetra in its religious, economic and political spheres, is the scene of open and veiled struggles between these two dominant castes, mitigated and complicated by inter-caste divisions among the Lingayats and other outside agents.

The *Viswakarma* or *Panchala* are the five artisan castes. They are the blacksmith, carpenter, goldsmith, stone masons and bell-metal worker (*Manu, Maya, Twasta, Silpi and Daivagnya*). Only the first three divisions are represented in Kshetra. They constitute merely occupational titles rather than sub-castes in Kshetra. The fourteen households are either agnatically or affinally related to one another. They all belong to the 'Younger House' (*Chikkamane*) division of the Panchalas. They have a myth which accounts for the two divisions in the Panchala caste viz., the 'Elder House' (*Hiremane*) and the 'Younger House' (*Chikkamane*). The myth is as follows.

'Manuachari and Mayachari, two uterine brothers used to live in a 'magnetic fortress' (*Sujigallu Kote*) and they had all the Vedas in their possession. The British upon their arrival in India learnt about the 'bachelor brothers' being in possession of all knowledge,



i.e., the Vedas. The British wanted to get hold of the Vedas, for it was with Vedic knowledge, later on that they were able to invent automobiles, railways and aeroplanes. The arms and amunitions which the British possessed were useless in the attempt to seize the fortress for they got stuck in the magnetic fortress. The bachelor brothers would not part with the Vedas and the British were after the Vedas.

'The British devised a way to send a spy to get to know the secret of capturing the fortress. So they sent a young beautiful woman who succeeded in gaining entry into the fortress by pleading that she was an orphan and that she would work as a maid to the brothers. In due course Manuachari fell in love with her and they began to meet in secret. One night the woman pretended as if she was fast asleep and began crying in her sleep that the house is on fire. Manuachari took her to be asleep and exclaimed, "Silly ! Who on this earth is capable of growing '*Tarakanahullu*' (a kind of grass) in large enough quantities to burn down the fortress ?" The woman passed on the information to the British.

'The British who had already become the lords of the earth, at once commanded the peasants to grow large quantities of the grass. One fine day they collected the grass, spread it around the fortress and set fire to it. Only the fortress was burnt, while the people and things inside were safe. They took the Vedas from the brothers.'

'The woman came forward and confessed then that she was spying for the British. By then she had borne a child to Manuachari and it was difficult to separate them. Mayachari, the younger brother, was disgusted with the whole affair, and pronounced that henceforth the two brothers should live separately, the elder and the younger brothers constituting 'Hiremane and Chikkamane' respectively with no commensal and marital relations.'

Manuachari fathered illegitimate children from a woman of a different and perhaps lower caste. Thus the issues were relegated to a lower status, and they took to eating meat and drinking alcohol. The representatives of Mayachari were without these drawbacks and hence enjoyed a higher status, and they did not accept cooked food from the Hiremane section.<sup>1</sup> Since the two houses were founded by uterine brothers, and their children classed as parallel cousins, they would not break the taboo of incest. So they do not intermarry.

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1955, 'The Social System of a Mysore Village' in *Village India*, Ed. Marriott. p. 7. The distinction between Matachari and Kulachari seem to be akin to the divisions described above.



Each is a distinct endogamous group.

The myth is important because it attributes Vedas and Vedic knowledge as being in possession of the Panchalas. The *Daivagnya* (bell-metal worker) is supposed to be well versed in the other four crafts also. He carves and co-ordinates different things. Hence his status is comparable to Brahma, the Creator. In this way the myth tries to establish the claims of the superiority of the Panchalas as 'Viswa-Brahmans'.

The Panchalas of Kshetra are strict vegetarians and teetotallers. The reasons for including the Panchalas among the Twice-born castes are based on the following facts. Like the Brahmins, the Panchalas do not accept cooked food from any other caste in the village, whereas non-Lingayats and Untouchables do accept food from them. Like Brahmins, they wear the sacred thread and have their own priest (who do not constitute a separate caste), who renders ritual services to the caste. The Panchalas in Kshetra do not officiate as priests to any particular caste, but they provide priests for the two temples of the female deities called Uramma and Durugamma. They are village deities, although Durugamma is also a favourite deity of the Kurubas.

The life-cycle ceremonies among the Panchalas and the general notions of purity and pollution, resemble those of the Brahmins. Birth and death involve eleven days' pollution, girls attaining puberty are segregated for five days, while menstruating women observe three days as the pollution period. All the Twice-born do not allow widow re-marriage, while a Brahmin widow has her head completely shaved.

The services of a carpenter and a blacksmith are indispensable to the village agriculturists. The patron-client relationship cuts across caste barriers, in that the carpenter and blacksmith serve all agricultural households irrespective of caste status. The material—wood and iron—which these castes handle are not polluting. So all agricultural households are potential customers to them and they are paid annually in kind.

The work of a carpenter is needed at all agriculture stages. He manufactures and repairs wooden implements such as the seed-drill, the plough etc. which are needed for agriculture. A carpenter's job is more profitable than a blacksmith's, although they both own and work with their own instruments of production such as the saw, the hammer and the furnace. Whereas a carpenter works on his own on any item of carpentry, a blacksmith is supplied with the raw

material, charcoal, and the patrons' services such as blowing the bellows and beating the red-hot-iron. He only gives shape and finish to metal implements but does not manufacture them like the carpenter. Further, the services of a blacksmith is not demanded throughout the year as compared with that of a carpenter. So quite a few Panchala families in Kshetra carry on both blacksmithy and carpentry together.

After the agricultural season is over, the carpenter also undertakes the manufacture of wooden frames for houses on cash payment. House construction, especially roofing, entails considerable skill on the part of the carpenter. Strong thin logs of wood, or bamboos or planks form the first layer of an horizontal thatch which is then plastered with mud.

In addition, one or two individuals have become skilled in making chairs and tables. This is in response to an increased local demand for them. Making them marks not only a departure from traditional articles but also calls for increased skill on the part of the carpenters.

In Kshetra the total number of agricultural households is 142, and their patronage is divided among the ten Panchala households. Since the average number of patrons for each Panchala household is few, the Panchalas generally do not discriminate among their patrons on the basis of their caste status. An Untouchable patron is not discriminated against as compared with a Lingayat patron. In fact, the Panchalas compete among themselves to acquire more patrons, or at least work zealously for their patrons, to prevent them from employing other artisans.

The patron-client relationship, commensurate with payment in kind, is further strengthened by ritual services, particularly as rendered by carpenters. A carpenter supplies a pair of wooden dolls during a wedding and occasionally builds a canopy which the Veerasaivas use for carrying the dead. Considered from this angle, the patron-client relationship endures on account of the ritual ties. The economically dominant patron receives ritual services from his Panchala artisan. Economic dominance often goes with political power, here implying the subordination of Panchalas to their agricultural patrons. This position is reversed when Panchalas become patrons to other servicing castes, such as the barber, washermen and madiga. Those who serve in one situation and one set of relationships could also become patrons in a different situation with a different set of people. The economic dependence of those who serve is paralleled by the ritual dependence of the patron. One complements the other. The ritual services essentially strengthen the



already existing interdependence between castes. In doing this, castes rendering ritual services accept economic and political subordination.

## 2 A. Comparison Between the Veerasaivas and the Twice-born Castes

The Veerasaivas of Kshetra contest the superiority of the Twice-born in general and the Brahmins in particular. They have their own priestly caste who meet all their ritual requirements. As I shall be dealing with the Veerasaivas at some length in my next chapter, I shall here concern myself only with comparing in a general way the Veerasaivas with the Twice-born.

Jangams as a priestly caste usually constitute an endogamous group. The Jangam officiates among all ranks of Lingayats during the life-cycle ceremonies and on other ceremonial occasions. He also officiates for Kuruba, Barike, Talawari, Washermen and Cheluvadi. A Jangam serves more castes and many more people than a Brahmin. The Jangam interdines with all Lingayats with the exception of barbers. All Lingayats, non-Lingayats, and Untouchables accept cooked food from the hands of a Jangam. Jangams are strict vegetarians and teetotallers.

Caste membership is acquired by individuals who are born into the caste of their parents. Alteration of caste status becomes difficult, though not impossible. For example, excommunication or conversion to other faiths such as Islam or Christianity, can alter one's caste status. In addition an individual can annul caste status by becoming a *sanyasi*. However, these are the only exceptions.

In the same way, Veerasaiva, a sectarian caste, though it is, in Indian terms, a comparatively recent growth, is now more than crystallized. I mean by this that it has become a system in itself. Although it acknowledges birth as an important and general way of securing membership, it has been and still is, a faith where individuals and groups can be assimilated from other castes. With conversion, individuals are given—the emblem of the Veerasaivas—the personal lingam. They become vegetarians and teetotallers, and break of all relationships with members of their previous caste. I shall discuss the phenomenon of conversion fully while dealing with Veerasaivism, its growth and spread in the past, and illustrate it with contemporary examples of converts. This kind of social mobility is impossible in the framework of Brahmanical religion. This is an important point of departure from orthodox Hinduism.

Among Veerasaivas, personal lingams are given at birth or conversion and are worn on the body throughout life by all, irrespec-



pective of sex, age and status. At death, an individual is buried with it. In contrast, the wearing of the sacred thread among the Twice-born is restricted to males after they undergo initiation. They change it with every birth and death in the family, in addition to annual ceremonial renewals. Further Veerasaivism entrusts every individual with the religious duty of worshipping his personal lingam before each major meal. This kind of 'religious individualism' is very much restricted especially for Brahmin women.

The concept of pollution, which is connected with the notions of differential ritual status central to orthodox religion, is very much diminished in importance among the Veerasaivas. Pollution contracted by the family at birth, by a girl attaining maturity, by a menstruating woman, and above all, at death is reduced to the minimum among the Veerasaivas. How far that minimum period may be considered as the pollution period may be treated more as a matter of opinion than a certainty. The Veerasaivas bury their dead, and do not burn them according to the practice of the Twice-born.

The use of fire on all ceremonial occasions, such as wedding, is common among the Twice-born. The use of fire is also associated with the performance of sacrifice. As against this, the Veerasaivas do not use fire on any ceremonial occasion. The sacred lamp (*Kalasa*) replaces the Brahmanical fire.

The cardinal principles of Veerasaivism, Guru, Linga, and Jangam, at a mystical plane become identical and are believed to be combined in the same person. A Jangam, officiating as both Jangam and Guru, in the end transcends Linga, the divine symbol of Shiva, and is considered above it, so that he is identified with God, which is the highest position an individual can attain in the religious field. This is not the case in Brahmanical religion. An officiating Brahmin priest is only an intermediary between a man and the deity, and he directs the ceremony by maintaining scrupulous ritual purity and keeping a certain spatial distance between himself and the person who has undertaken the ceremony.

A Jangam and his Lingayat disciple are identified as equals at some stages of the ceremonial observance. This sort of equality between the spiritual Teacher and his disciple is absent among the Twice-born. A Brahmin officiating for other Twice-born castes, such as Kshatriyas, does not accept cooked food from them. Even while officiating for other Brahmins, rank and scrupulous purity are maintained before food can be accepted, whereas a Jangam eats a ceremonial meal whenever he officiates among his Lingayat disciples.

Finally Veerasaivas of all ranks worship only Shiva and his several manifestations. Hence their sect is monotheistic in aim. In Kshetra the Veerasaiva households invariably have Shiva or one of his several incarnations for their family deity. The Twice-born castes do not subscribe to the monotheistic view at the popular level, though at the philosophical level they do recognize a 'Panthistic-monotheism'. Polytheism seems to be a major feature of all Brahmanical religions insofar as there are distinct Vaishnavite and Saivite groups.

All Veerasaivas, with the exception of barbers, interdine. A barber eats from the hands of Veerasaivas and accepts ritual services only from a Jangam. Still the sub-castes under division five and the general structural organization among the Veerasaivas exhibit a ladder-like hierarchy. Whereas a Jangam always interdines with all Lingayats with the exception of barbers, the sub-castes under division five have developed commensality only in the 20th century. The non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes accept food from the Veerasaivas and the servicing castes serve them.

## 2 B. The Lingayat Potter and Barber

The Lingayat 'potters' are called potters after their profession. They interdine only with the Veerasaivas and accept ritual services from a Jangam. The non-Lingayats and Untouchables not only serve the potters but also accept food from their hands.

The single Lingayat potter family in Kshetra does not maintain the traditional patron-artisan relationship in the village. There is only one man in the family who, with the assistance of his mother and wife, attempts to keep up the potter's occupation by manufacturing little pots once or twice a year. A barber's family serves him in return for pots. The potter also supplies earthen lamps and pots required in the Kshetra Linga temple twice a year, for which he is paid in cash. The pots which the potter supplies during a wedding serve a ritual purpose. But these services are paid for in cash unlike the traditional payment in kind which leads to an enduring interpersonal relationship between the customers and the artisans.

In Kshetra today, imported earthenware and metal pots are being used increasingly. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas seldom use earthen pots. It seems as though the potter's art will die out in the village in a generation or two. There have never been many potters in Kshetra, although there is a street called 'Potters Street' (*Kumbara Beedi*). The street is now also known by an alternative name,



'Paramesha Gowda Street' after a few Lingayat families of the same lineage which live there.

Like the potters, the Lingayat barbers are called simply 'barbers' after their profession. They are Lingayats, interdine with the Veerasaivas, and accept only a Jangam's ritual services. It is the sole caste from whose hands nobody eats in the village.

The barbers serve all castes with the exception of the Untouchables. The Untouchables shave themselves, or get shaved at the barber's shop at Kolalu, Guttalli, or some nearby town when they go there. The barbers of Kshetra have patron-artisan relationships in the village. In addition, they serve in the adjoining villages of Chandrapur, and Shivapur on cash terms. A barber goes round to his patrons to render his normal services every fortnight or so. He is paid annually in kind.

The barber's service is perhaps the only service compared with other specialist jobs, which men cannot dispense with easily in village India. A couple of schoolmasters and Kshatriya youths who possessed their own personal shaving sets were looked upon as innovators by some elders in Kshetra. However, these innovators did not regard their shaving kit as something which could ultimately dispense with the barber's services. It was considered merely an aid to a smart appearance.

A barber's services during ceremonies tend to be more binding. The first-haircut, ritual shaving during weddings, and other occasions such as initiation and funerary rites, are important ceremonial occasions when a barber's services are essential. In 1956-57, a Kuruba patron in Kshetra who had had bad relations with his barber for two years chose to celebrate his son's marriage without a barber's ritual services. After the wedding, the Kuruba caste council and Lingayat elders gathered at the instance of the barber, and levied a fine of Rs. 25/- on the patron. They found him guilty of having shaved himself, since he did not recruit any substitute barber either locally or from the neighbouring villages. This was considered as much a disruption of a ritual tie as an infringement of caste rule.

Barbers are discriminated against by all castes in the village. The Jangams say that if the barbers underwent the *Diksha*<sup>1</sup> (purification) ceremony and served only the Veerasaivas, they would accept cooked food from them. Jangams serve them on all cere-

1. The word *Diksha*, has a wide range of meaning and implies purification, initiation, anointment and so forth. In this book wherever I have used the term, I have given the approximate English equivalent.



monial occasions but do not eat in their houses. In return, barbers give Jangams free service. Other castes in the village are ambivalent in their attitude to eating cooked food from a barber's kitchen. Some say they cannot accept such food, since he is engaged in hair cutting and handling all sorts of heads. Others say that to eat from a barber's hand is an ill omen. Still others seek refuge in tradition and say that since their ancestors did not eat from the hands of barbers, they too do not.

Although no one looks upon a barber's touch as polluting and hair cutting as defiling, everyone takes a bath after a shave. They say that a bath is necessary to wash off the cut hair which adheres to the body. After his day's work, even the barber will first have a bath, and then only worship his personal lingam and eat his lunch. Once he has taken a bath he will not serve his patrons.

The barbers are vegetarians and teetotallers. Since nobody in the village accepts cooked food from his hands, the barber is unhappy about his position. My barber informant told me that their family Jangam is advising them to undergo Diksha and confine their services to the Veerasaiva community. With this change, the Jangam is prepared to eat cooked food from the barbers as are also the other Lingayat castes. This would certainly improve the barber's position at least in relation to the Veerasaivas. But the loss of clients from other castes would cause great hardship and hence the barbers are unwilling to follow the advice of the Jangams. Further, the barbers do not distinguish between their clients whether they pay him in cash or in kind. Customers who pay cash are only casual customers and the relationships are not so enduring as services rendered in return for payment in kind.

The service castes which serve a barber are either paid in kind or receive service in return from the barber. The Madigas who supply red earth on festive occasions are paid in kind and they do not beg food from barbers. When pressed, people say, 'you cannot accept food from one who is always scraping another's head'. The barbers are classed as one of the Lingayat castes and their position in the village caste hierarchy is therefore quite high compared to the non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes. Members of all the castes in the village do not eat from his hands, and the barber himself eats only from the hands of the Veerasaivas. The Jangams' ritual services are available to barbers on all ceremonial occasions including the life-cycle ceremonies.

The social and religious inter-actions of the barbers are mostly

with the Veerasaivas and not with the other castes with whom the barber has professional contacts. There is not a single caste in Kshetra which accepts food from every other caste. Therefore it would be incorrect as far as Kshetra is concerned to conclude that 'those from whom all will eat are higher than those from whom none will eat.'<sup>1</sup> There are many variables in addition to commensal relations, which should be considered while trying to determine the rank of a caste in the hierarchy.

### 3. The Non-Lingayat Caste and their Relative Position in the Hierarchy

By definition all non-Lingayat (not the Twice-born) and Untouchable castes eat meat and drink liquor. Muslims eat beef, while Madigas are said to eat beef as well as carrion. With the exception of Jangams and the Twice-born, all other castes allow widow remarriage.

For the sake of comparing the Hindu and the non-Hindu castes, although they both come under the non-Lingayat category, in this section I will take up the non-Hindus separately after having discussed the Hindu castes in Division C in the hierarchy. The Kurubas of Kshetra belong to the '*Hathi Kankana*' division. A *Kankana* is a cotton thread, yellowed with turmeric solution, which is wound round a betel leaf and this is tied on the right wrist of a bride and groom and other subjects in auspicious ceremonies. According to the myth, the Hathi Kankana Kurubas use cotton thread as kankana. In contrast, '*Unne kankana*' Kurubas use woollen thread. They interdine but do not intermarry. The Kurubas of Kshetra are not shepherds as the name indicates; they are agriculturists.

The Kurubas of Kshetra eat from the hands of castes above them with the exception of barbers. All other castes below them accept food from the Kurubas, and service castes render them ritual and professional services. Kurubas occasionally eat from the hands of the three castes immediately below them. When these four castes dine with one another they use brass plates instead of plates made of bell-metal.

It is believed that brass plates, like silver and gold absorb or neutralise pollution, and are not contaminating like bell-metal. Bell-metal is brittle and put to intensive daily use. Brass plates are used

1. Mayer, A. 1960. *Caste and Kinship in Central India*, p. 34.

on ceremonial occasions for carrying a ceremonial lamp (*kalasa* or *aarti*), or other ceremonial objects. The ritual value of brass exceeds its actual value, and bell-metal is dearer than brass. People told me that bell-metal is like a mud pot (*kanchu-henchu*)—it is easily broken and serves no ritual purpose. The use of brass plates in this connection has provided an integrating mechanism between castes which otherwise contest for equal rank. The commensal rules against non-acceptance of food from castes of lower or 'doubtful' rank in the hierarchy is thereby relaxed.

Some Kuruba families have ritual roles in the Kshetra Linga temple. This puts them under an obligation to the Kshatriyas. In the last ten years Kurubas have managed to form a caste council at the instance of the Kshatriya President of the Village Panchayat Board. It was a Kshatriya who had helped them to find a Jangam guru towards the close of the 19th century in place of the guru of Kuruba caste.

Before the formation of the caste council, the Kurubas were divided into three or four groups with little unanimity of opinion or common ground among them. I was told that a couple of marriages had been conducted by a Brahmin priest since the formation of the caste council. But today, through the very same caste council, they have reached an agreement that Jangams are to officiate in all life-cycle ceremonies. This change is in tune with the Brahmins refusal to direct mortuary rites. A Jangam directs it by ceremonially placing his foot on the head of the corpse. Since a division of ritual roles between Jangams and Brahmins, while officiating over life-cycle ceremonies, is not a workable proposition, the Kurubas decided to invite Jangams to officiate on all ceremonial occasions.

With the change in the caste of their guru and the subsequent decision to continue the Jangam's ritual services, there is a strong tendency towards Veerasaivism among Kurubas. They find the tenets of Veerasaivism more compatible with their position. In fact some Kurubas become converted to Veerasaivism in the early 1920's and it would be profitable to discuss the status of these converts in Kshetra.

In the last few decades, two Kuruba families of Kshetra underwent initiation at the hands of the Jangam of Shivapur, who also claims to have helped the spread of Veerasaivism by converting some 20,000 people belonging to different castes in different parts of India. The Jangam is also the family spiritual teacher (*Maneguru*) of most of the Panchachara Lingayats of Kshetra. The Kuruba-Lingayats



have certainly come under the influence of the Veerasaivas and this has affected their status in relation to the Kurubas.

At the moment, there is a lone Kuruba-Lingayat widow in Kshetra, other converts having moved out to other places. Since conversion, she has become a strict vegetarian and teetotaler, and does not accept food from the hands of other Kurubas. Even in times of sickness, the widow cannot avail herself of the services of her sister-in-law, a non-convert, and therefore, the latter can neither enter the widow's kitchen nor cook for her.

The widow has given her lands on lease and she ekes out her living with the money she gets from running a small shop. She sells betel, arecanut *beedis*,<sup>1</sup> matches and so on. Her nephew, a non-convert who lives in Shivapur often comes to help her buy things. He is her heir.

The widow wears a personal lingam and offers worship to the picture of the Jangam guru who invested her with the lingam. However, she was not very happy about her conversion and she felt quite insecure. While still in her youth, she had family quarrels with her brother, and was a widow without children. The Jangam of Shivapur sympathised with her and encouraged her bent for religious devotion. He invested her with the lingam, promising to employ her in his local Mutt, a promise not yet carried out. She is like a fish out of water. This happens in the case of many converts from one faith to another. They are not easily accepted in the new fold, though their descendants may be accepted. The local Lingayats say that the widow is a very orthodox follower of Veerasaiva tenets. But they do not interdine with her and intermarriages between Kuruba-Lingayats and Lingayats have not been reported either. A large number of Lingayats told me that the exclusive burial ground used by the Veerasaivas could not be used by converts.

This case, nevertheless, illustrates the change in caste status, and the possibility of social mobility. Religions adopting conversion as part of the mechanism of recruiting followers to the faith, given the time depth, will achieve positive results.

In the past the Marathas of Kshetra formed the bodyguard of Kshatriyas going on tour and used to style themselves as '*Dalavay*' (military-men). Today the Marathas play some ritual roles in the Kshetra Linga temple.

The Marathas eat from the hands of all the castes above them.

1. Indigenous leaf cigarettes.

But their commensality with Kurubas, Setti Banajigas and Barike demands the use of brass plates instead of plates of bell-metal. In fact the Marathas claim that they are higher in status than the Kurubas. In towns and villages where they form a majority, they would not eat from the hands of the Kurubas. But being few in Kshetra, they interdine with their Kuruba neighbours.

The pattern of their ritual life is different from that of the Kurubas. A Brahmin officiates for the Marathas on all ceremonial occasions. They wear the sacred thread, yet eat meat and drink liquor. Their life-cycle ceremonies, and concepts of purity and pollution, are modelled on those of the Twice-born, with the exception that they allow widows to re-marry.

The Setti Banajigas of Kshetra accept food from the hands of all castes above them and also from the Barikes. If the Kurubas, Marathas and Setti Banajigas eat with the Barikes, this is carried on discreetly, and brass plates are used instead of bell-metal ones. The Setti Banajigas claim that because Kurubas take food from Barikes, and Setti Banajigas from Kurubas, it is equivalent to Setti Banajigas eating with Barikes. However, where the Setti Banajigas are in a majority, I am told, they will not accept food from any of these three castes.

The officiating priests for the Setti Banajigas are of the 'Same-*raya*' caste and they are called '*Oshtamaru*' and are devotees of Vishnu. In Kshetra and its neighbourhood, there are not many Setti Banajigas and also there is no caste of *Oshtamaru* nearby. A substitute for an *Oshtama* is sought in the services of a Brahmin priest by the Setti Banajigas of Kshetra. A Brahmin does not go personally to officiate on all ritual occasions. The Setti Banajiga carries consecrated water from the house of a Brahmin and mixes it with the sacred ashes obtained from the local Human temple. This mixture is called '*Thirtha*', and is sprinkled all over the house to effect purification from pollution on such occasions as birth, a girl's puberty, and death. Life-cycle ceremonies and notions of purity and pollution among the Setti Banajigas resemble those of the Brahmins. In the past a Setti Banajiga family played the ritual role of waving an *aarti* (ceremonial lamp) before the Kshetra Linga deity in the temple.

The Barikes of Kshetra take food from all the castes above them. In the past they were palanquin-bearers for the Kshetra Linga temple. The Barikes, hold and discharge one of the twelve

formal ritual offices<sup>1</sup> in the traditional village structure. Their work is associated with water specially plying boats and carrying water. They provide priests for the worship of the village Goddess (*Grama Devathe*). A Jangam officiates for them on all ceremonial occasions.

About sixty or seventy years ago, a Brahmin's ritual services were sought by the Barikes. By effecting a change in their funerary rites, the Barikes began to invite Jangams to officiate in place of Brahmin priests. Till then Barikes used to offer cooked food at the grave on the third day after the death of a person. This is known as 'offering cooked-rice to the crows'. The belief is that if the crows eat the offered food, the dead person would have an easy passage to the other world. Any delay caused anxiety, since it was a sign that the dead soul was not at rest. In either case it involved a good deal of waiting near the grave, and anxiety if crows did not touch the food at all. The Barikes began to give up this practice in favour of using the service of a Jangam. The Jangam directs the worship of the corpse by ceremonially placing his foot on the head of the corpse.

In Kshetra, all castes with the exception of the Twice-born, the Marathas, the Setti Banajigas and the Muslims and Pinjaris, have given up the third day funerary rite of offering cooked rice to crows near the grave. This is the customary practice among the Veerasaivas. Even the Untouchables observe this rite. A Jangam does not go to conduct the worship of an Untouchable corpse personally. But the water consecrated by washing his feet is carried home by Untouchables and sprinkled all over the place. This removes death pollution. The change in the customary practice of the Barikes indicates their preferences for, and perhaps nearness to, Veerasaivism. A change like this may eventually affect the status of caste and probably provide an incentive for caste mobility.

In the past the '*Basavi*' custom was in vogue among the Barikes of Kshetra. The institution of Basavi is that a girl would be dedicated in the name of a deity, often a female deity. She could not marry any man thereafter, but could take lovers from her own caste, or from a caste of equal status or of higher status. She would serve the deity on

1. The twelve ritual offices known as '*Hanneradu Ayagaru*', are also known as '*Bara Baluti*'; they are held by: *Gowda, Banakara, Badagi, Kammara, Akkasale, Kumbara, Navinda, Barike, Talawari, Agasa, Cheluvadi, and Madiḡa*.

Village Headman, ritual leader of the village, Carpenter, Blacksmith, Goldsmith, Potter, Barber, Barike, Talawari, Washermen, Cheluvadi and Madiḡa). The animal sacrificed to the village Goddess for instance, was shared by all these twelve persons and each was entitled to receive a particular portion of the carcass. Although a formalised body, it often functioned informally.



ceremonial occasions. In fact, this practice was advanced as one of the reasons why Kurubas, Marathas and Setti Banajigas do not readily accept food from the Barikes. But the evidence at my disposal, which I shall record later, suggests that the Basavis helped to bring about closer contact between castes by taking lovers from other castes and also by playing some special ritual roles.

The ritual services of a Basavi are considered to be of utmost importance during a Hindu wedding.<sup>1</sup> In Kshetra, a Basavi ceremonially threads the black beads and the marriage pendant called '*tali*' for all the castes except the Panchalas. Villagers explained that this is a good omen because a Basavi can never be widowed. She is described as '*Nitya Sumangali*'. The tali is threaded by a Basavi. This is in anticipation of a lifelong married status. It also expresses the fear of widowhood and a desire to avoid it at all costs.

Talawaris accept cooked food from all the castes above them. A Jangam officiates for them on all ceremonial occasions. Thus their life-cycle ceremonies are modelled on those of the Veerasaivas. The institution of Basavi was in vogue among the Talawaris in the past. The caste name Talawari originates from a salaried post in the traditional administration of the village where they were supposed to do a watchman's job by going round the village at night. They also held one of the twelve formal ritual offices in the traditional structure of the village.

A Talawari does a further ritual service to other castes, generally to higher castes. Any good news, such as the birth of a son or news of a betrothed girl coming of age, is often conveyed to the husband's or would-be-husband's family by a Talawari. The party at the other end would normally treat him to sweet dishes and give him a substantial gift such as a metal pot or a heifer.

The washermen of Kshetra serve all castes above them and claim that they do not eat from the hands of a Talawari, Muslim and Pinjari. They neither serve nor eat from the hands of Untouchables. The consensus of opinion is that washermen rank just above the Untouchables. The fact that they serve all castes, on normal as well as ritual occasions, certainly accounts for their rank being lower than the two non-Hindu castes and the Talawaris.

The principle of hierarchical arrangement of castes tacitly maintains that castes which give but do not receive food from others

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1942, *Marriage and Family in Mysore*, see Chapter XVI, pp. 177-84, for a detailed description of the institution of Basavis.

usually rank higher. It also maintains that commensality exists between castes which have equal status. Accordingly, Muslims, Pinjaris and Talawaris who rank higher than washermen, do not accept cooked food from them. The washermen seem to contradict the general principle by refusing to accept food from the three castes above them. However, the washermen are economically and politically dependent on their patrons from these castes also and they serve them both on normal and ritual occasions. Thus they cannot claim superiority or equality with the Muslims, Pinjaris and Talawaris.

In Kshetra, washermen wash mostly women's clothes. They seldom wash men's clothes as it involves the use of soap. They enter into individual relationships with their customers and get paid annually in kind. Besides, each time a washerwoman returns washed clothes, the house-holder gives her a *rotti* (dry pancake of jowar flour), and washermen also collect food from their patrons' houses on festive occasions.

Lingayat informants told me that the work washermen do is more rewarding than might appear. For throughout the year one washerman or the other begs for extra help from their patrons in addition to customary payments. Further it is customary in Kshetra that the set of clothes that washermen take for washing can be used by them for a couple of days, after which they wash them and return them to the owner.

At delivery time a washerwoman might act as a midwife. In Kshetra washerwomen midwife assist the Brahmins and Kshatriyas and even help to bathe the mother and the baby until the period of pollution is over. They wash the soiled clothes for which they are paid four or five seers<sup>1</sup> of jowar, betel-nut and food. When a girl attains puberty, the family washerwoman is given a blouse for her services. When a girl gets married, her husband's family washerwoman asks for a saree and a blouse and gets them from the Veera-saiva patrons.

For the many ritual services rendered by a washerman during a wedding or any other auspicious occasion when washermen spread *nelamadi* (spreading clean cloth on the ground) for people observing rituals to walk on, he will get paid separately.

A dead person's clothes, bedding and gifts of grain made at death are generally given to washermen. Families which could not afford a washerman's services on ordinary occasions, do wash their

1. A seer is about 2 lbs.

linen themselves. But washermen are certainly employed on ritual occasions. A Jangam officiates among washermen on all ceremonial occasions.

The washermen in Kshetra also wash the clothes of the Kshetra Linga deity taking special care not to mix them with soiled clothes. For this and other services rendered in the temple during festivals, the washermen are paid cash.

#### 4. The Non-Hindu Castes

The Muslims and Pinjaris interdine and they both eat from the hands of castes above them with the exception of the barbers. The Muslims' mother-tongue is Urdu and they visit only the mosque, while the Pinjaris' mother-tongue is Kannada and they visit both the mosque and the Hindu temples. Of the life-cycle ceremonies birth involves forty days' pollution, circumcision twenty-one days, a girl's puberty nine days, and death thirty-six days. Periods of pollution and methods of effecting purification are the same for both castes. A Kazi or Mullah officiates on ceremonial occasions. The Pinjaris are not cottoncarders as the name indicates, but agriculturists.

In contrast to the Hindus, the west is a sacred quarter for both Muslims and Pinjaris. Most auspicious ceremonies are conducted by them facing the west. No lamps are lit during ceremonial occasions whereas a sacred lamp is necessary on any auspicious occasion among Hindus.

According to my Pinjari informants, the way a Muslim or a Pinjari corpse is disposed of, with funerary rites conducted according to the sacred text of the Koran, leaves no room for the soul to wander on earth and become a ghost or do any harm as the Hindus believe. The dead, whether married or unmarried, are treated equally. The unmarried are believed to go straight to heaven and are entitled to full funerary rites. In contrast to this, most Hindus maintain a distinction between the married and the unmarried dead. The unmarried dead are not accorded much importance. All mortuary rites are withheld. They are buried or burnt with their face downwards. An unmarried person dying at a ripe age is not included in the category of ancestors when periodic worship takes place. It is marital status and not age that matters.<sup>1</sup>

The intercaste relationship that exists between the service castes, Muslims and Pinjaris, i.e., the trader-client relationship, is almost

1. Srinivas, M.N. *Religion and Society among coorgs of South India* 1952, Notes the same among the Coorgs pp. 95-96.



devoid of ritual elements. Muslims and Pinjaris together form only a small minority, and their relationship with the other castes in the village tends to be cordial. But if the Hindus want to do something which is contrary to Muslim and Pinjari beliefs and practices, they are not in a position to protest or resist. As a minority community, they feel helpless but can ill afford to show hostile feelings against the overwhelming Hindu majority. The following case will illustrate this.

In 1956, the local Hindus made preparations to open the grave of a Pinjari man buried in early 1955. The drought convinced the Hindus that the late X was a leper who should have been burnt and not buried. The Hindu belief that a leper's corpse does not decompose but opens its mouth in the grave when there are any rain clouds, scattering the clouds at once, is not shared by the Pinjaris. Hence the Pinjaris had to put up with the unhappy incident. The dominant caste enforces its customs and beliefs on all, on certain occasions whether they be Muslims or Christians. In Kshetra the Hindus tried to superimpose their own beliefs and customs on the Pinjaris.

### 5. The Untouchables<sup>1</sup> and the Hierarchy

The Cheluvadis are an Untouchable caste. They accept food from all the castes above them. They are mostly pipers in the local temple. They serve all the castes above them when their services are required such as during a wedding or funeral. The ritual

1. Mayer, A. 1960, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 57-9 discusses the suitability or otherwise of the concept of 'Untouchability'. Mayer prefers the usage 'Harijans' or 'Exterior' castes to Untouchables. There are many points of similarity between my data from Kshetra and that of Mayer's, especially about the so-called 'Harijans'. I continue to use the term 'Untouchables'.

The 'pollution-barrier' divides the Untouchables from the caste-Hindus. An Untouchable is always a source of pollution to a caste-Hindu. One cannot draw generalizations, as to how economic and political expediency or other factors would adversely affect the practice of untouchability by caste-Hindus. Local variations—with a degree of flexibility or rigidity in practice—do not make an Untouchable any-the-less an Untouchable.

Caste-group endogamy perpetuates the caste system. To me, then, participating in many common village activities or remaining outside them is not vital. The Hindus, Muslims and Christians have very little in common between them, in terms of religious beliefs, practices, customs and traditions. Still Muslims and Christians are not Untouchables and they remain above the 'pollution-barrier' and are not a source of pollution. Since all caste-groups are members of the village social structure, they must participate in many common village activities to maintain the solidarity of the village. No caste-group then, could be described as an 'exterior' caste.

The term 'Harijan' (Children of God Hari), though extensively used, has lost its original meaning and emphasis put on it by Gandhiji, who coined the term. For all practical purposes, a villager uses 'Harijans' and 'Untouchables' as synonymous terms.

services undertaken by the Cheluvadis indicate their economic and political dependence on the higher castes. But it cannot be said to be anything like the seller-customer relationship that exists between the service castes and the other castes in the village. The Cheluvadis render their services mostly for cash. It could almost be termed as a 'contractual relationship', bereft of enduring economic, political, and ritual ties. Where Cheluvadis serve on occasions which involve village-wide participation, such as the festival of a village deity, they are allowed to beg from all the houses in the village.<sup>1</sup> They always demand cash for their services.

The terms of contract involve certain obligations to be fulfilled by both the parties. The Cheluvadi pipers are fed at a wedding feast and are paid cash. But should they be unable to play on their pipes for any reason, other pipers could easily be brought from elsewhere. There would be no disruption of economic, political and ritual ties.

A few years ago, the Kshatriyas of Kshetra dismissed the local pipers and brought in pipers from a neighbouring village. But the nature of service in the temple, the distance and the kinship ties among pipers of both villages, made it an unsatisfactory arrangement. So the Kshatriyas subsequently re-employed the local pipers. Also in May 1960, the pipers did not turn up at the Kshetra Linga temple, when the ritual of the wedding of the deity was in progress. The Brahmin priest, the Kshatriya trustee and the Weaver Executive officer were furious, and said that they would replace them if they repeated the offence. The Cheluvadi pipers who were away with a wedding party did come back the following day and serve in the temple as usual.

They serve in the Kshetra Linga temple twice a day, in the morning and evening. In addition to this they serve on all festive occasions in the temple, when extra duty falls on them. They work on a monthly salary basis.

A Jangam officiates for the Cheluvadis on all ceremonial occasions. In the past there were a number of Basavis among the Cheluvadis. The Cheluvadis of Kshetra live right in the middle of the village amidst other castes.

The Untouchable *Kanchaveeras* are a special caste of Madigas. They have a myth which links their caste with the performance of

1. I am not sure whether the Cheluvadis of Kshetra be in the village since the festival of the major village deity, 'Uramma' was stopped in the early 1940's as a result of a clash between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats

certain rituals in the Kshetra Linga temple. It also accounts how one of their ancestors, enticed by a pious Madiga woman, took her for his wife. The present Kanchaveeras are descendants of that marriage. The Kanchaveeras eat from the hands of all castes except barbers and Cheluvadis. Their ritual services are mostly confined to the Kshetra Linga temple where they perform the *pavada* (miracle) of piercing their legs and forearms with iron implements and wave aarti before the deity. Their ritual roles have made them reform their dietetic habits, in that they do not eat beef, and do not readily accept food from the hands of the Madigas who eat beef.

The temple proprietors, the Kshatriyas, are their gurus. All occasions involving ceremonial purification are given effect to by the Kshatriyas. The economic and political independence of Kanchaveeras from other castes in the village is bound up with their ritual role in the temple. But this puts the other caste-groups under the Kshatriyas.

An important feature of village inter-caste relations is that the practice of Untouchability and unapproachability are reduced to nil. The Kanchaveeras live just outside the temple premises, interspersed with other castes. The Untouchable Kanchaveeras and Cheluvadis neither live in an exclusive quarter of the village nor do they keep spatial distance from the higher castes in the Kshetra. This compares favourably with Untouchables in Kerala, Tanjore<sup>1</sup> and perhaps other districts in Mysore, where segregation and spatial distance between the Untouchables and the caste Hindus are maximised.

The Kanchaveeras take girls in marriage from the Madigas but do not give their girls to the Madigas. Their girls, when they are not married, are usually dedicated as Basavis.

The Madigas of Kshetra live in an exclusive colony of their own. They eat from the hands of all caste-groups, except the barbers and the Cheluvadis. They serve all castes with the exception of the Cheluvadis. The economic and political dependence of the Madigas on the villagers, especially the village agriculturists, is striking. So also is the ritual dependence of other castes on the Madigas.

A Brahmin or a Jangam obliges them by doing astrological calculations but neither officiates for the Madigas at ceremonies.

1. Gough, K. G. 1955, 'Social Structure of a Tanjore Village', *In Village India*, Ed. Marriott, M.



They were the sole caste to state that they do not know who their caste Spiritual Teacher is (*Kulaguru*). My informants from other castes assured me that there is no caste that does not have a spiritual teacher, to whom people of a particular caste are subordinate and ultimately answerable for any infringement of caste rules.

The client-seller relationship between the village agriculturists and the Madigas is reinforced by many ritual services rendered by the latter to the former. The Madigas dispose of dead cattle for their patrons, without charge; they skin the animal and prepare raw hide sandals or hide ropes for sale. In Kshetra, however, no one is skilled in leather work.

One form of patron-seller relationship—locally called *Kattaya*—involves the Madigas in supplying sandals and other leather goods used in agriculture by their patrons. This service is paid for in kind. But this is falling into disuse. The patrons are reluctant to pay large quantities of jowar (80 seers), especially when the price of the grain is quite high, for four or five crudely finished leather articles, while leather goods of better quality could be brought at a much lower price in town shops.

A second variety of the patron-seller relationship involves also the payment in kind made by his patron to his Madiga artisan for work rendered during the harvest season. Most Madiga families work on this basis. This is known as *susaya*. No one is actually a labourer who is tied down. For the rest of the year the Madigas are free to seek work as daily wage earners. Further, quite a few Madigas hire out their services annually on a permanent yet contractual basis, when they would serve a master but not necessarily a patron.<sup>1</sup>

Madigas eat beef. The caste occupation of removing dead cattle and skinning them has led the villagers to conclude that the Madigas also eat beef carrion. When I enquired of the Madigas for the first time, they denied that they ate carrion. But my caste Hindu informants were quite sceptical. Later on the Madigas modified their statement about eating carrion. They told me that they have changed their food habits in the last decade on the advice of local high caste Congress people. Also economic aid and contact with Government

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1955, 'The Social System of Mysore Village', in *Village India*, Ed. Marriott, M. Refer Section IV, pp. 26-31, for a detailed description of patron-seller relationships as well as types, where the distinction between the hereditary and the contractual *jita* servanthip is elucidated by the author.

officers have contributed to their giving up eating carrion regularly. A decade ago, the Madigas used to eat carrion more often than they do now.

Two Madigas are employed in the traditional administration of the village under the Headman and the Accountant. In recent years the village Panchayat Board has appointed two Madiga sweepers. For these and similar reasons, Madigas are fast coming under the influence of the Kshatriyas.

The Madigas supply red earth during festivals and beg food from their patrons. Red earth is extensively used in coating the outer walls as well as the kitchen of a house. Madigas alone are dispatched to deliver news of death for which they are paid in cash or given a valuable object like a metal dish or a heifer. They also supply poles of wood from a milk-exuding tree (*Tirukalli*) to make a bier and receive one anna and three pies in token for measuring the space to dig a grave.

During village festivals Madigas occasionally beat drums, for which they are paid cash. They also beat drums when a corpse is carried to the burial-ground, and are paid in money and grains.

Formerly, Lingayats used to allow Madigas to carry the 'gift basket' (*Danada putti*), along with the corpse to the burial ground. A basket full of grain is given as gift to Madigas, Cheluvadis and washermen before the corpse is taken out to be buried. In the early 1950's the Kanchaveeras of Shivaragudda in Dharwar district had a dispute with the Cheluvadi pipers and bade them follow the Kanchaveeras in a ceremonial procession, instead of going ahead of them. Pipers customarily head a procession, and so the Kanchaveeras fought in vain.

When the above news reached Kshetra, the Lingayats became alert. Since the Kanchaveeras are only a sub-caste of the Madigas, the next step was for the Madigas of Kshetra to pick a quarrel with the Cheluvadis. The Madigas, being locally numerous, harbour ill-feeling towards the Cheluvadis, and claim superiority over them. This became clear during the 1960 March-April village Panchayat Board elections when the Madigas refused to cast their votes in favour of members of the Lingayat party, which had nominated a Cheluvadi to contest the 'reserved seat'. But it has not lead to open conflict so far.

Since the 1950's the Lingayats of Kshetra have effected a minor change in their funerary rites. They dispensed with the services of a Madiga who used to carry the gift basket ahead of the corpse.

Instead, today, the gift basket is placed by the side of the corpse and carried with it. When questioned why they did not dispense with pipers my informants told me, "there can be no substitute for pipers. Their services are indispensable on this last occasion, more important than that of the Madigas." The change in the customary practice of the Lingayats points to their preference for one caste over the other and their willingness to accord a higher status to the Cheluvadis against the Madigas. "The Madigas are stupid not to understand the implication of the change in our funerary rites", was how one of my Lingayat informants summed up the situation for me.

## 6. Hierarchy and the General Sources of Flexibility.<sup>1</sup>

I have described so far caste-groups as they exist and discussed the intercaste relationships based on commensality to the extent that it helps to represent caste-groups in the hierarchy. In fact no caste in the village would be prepared to say that they are a low caste and are content to remain so. But they would equally never assert that they are a high caste. The moment they did it, they would encounter a contending party. For instance, a partisan of the Twice-born claimed that the Brahmins held the top rank. Immediately this was met with a counter argument, whereby the Veerasaivas—Jangams—were claimed to be of equal if not superior status.

The contending parties try to assert their superiority by not accepting ritual services of food from one another.<sup>2</sup> Villagers are well aware of the ambiguity and difficulty of arranging the caste-groups in a hierarchy. So where two caste-groups tend to oppose one another, they compromise by saying, "our caste is great (high, superior) for us, and their caste for them. One cannot fit them into a single hierarchy." This was so even with sub-castes among Lingayats, some non-Lingayats, and Untouchables.

My scheme necessarily gives an appearance of rigidity. But in actual practice it is not so. I have indicated how social mobility is built into the system. These flexibilities account for the ambiguity. I will outline a few of them below.

The institution of dedicating girls—the Basavi system—makes for close intercaste relationships, sometimes breaking through the

1. General sources of flexibility is used in the sense that the rules themselves allow for mobility.
2. Srinivas, M. N. 1962, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. 'Varna and caste' pp. 63-9, gives an account of the variety of ways in which castes claim or assert superiority against one another.



barrier of traditional occupations. For instance, some years ago, a Barike Basavi of Kshetra had a Panchala lover. The pair are remembered to have lived like husband and wife. The descendants of the Barike Basavi today do some carpentry in addition to agricultural work. They were taught the carpenter's trade by the Panchala lover. The eldest son in the family is named after the Panchala man. They maintained that Barike and Panchala families send gifts to one another every year during the annual ancestor-worship. In this case the ritual barrier against transgressing one's occupation was ineffective. The traditional occupation of the Barikes is connected with water. But today they have taken to carpentry. It has become an important source of income. True, they do not work under the patron—artisan relationship in the village, but prepare wooden frames for houses and make carts. The Panchalas have not raised any objections against Barike carpenters so far.

The Basavi institution has also helped to relax the practice of untouchability by caste Hindus. A Kuruba lover was openly living with a Cheluvadi Basavi. In the past a Madiga Basavi had a local Talawari lover. A Kanchaveera Basavi claimed to have had a local Pinjari lover in the past. Some of my caste Hindu informants told me that many Lingayats have taken Untouchable Basavis as mistresses. However, they were reluctant to name the parties.

In fact the Basavi institution allows for 'recognised' inter-caste sexual relationships where the position of the children is clearly secure, in that they belong to the mother's caste. In contrast to this, children born outside wedlock would invariably be classed illegitimate among all castes. Also several devices instituted to restore 'legal' status to the children are found in all castes. For instance among the Coorgs illegitimate children are given *Okka* membership of their mother's lover during his life time or even after death before the corpse is disposed of, when the children would participate in the funeral rites.

Another source of flexibility is the status accorded to a religious man. This is the case of individual mobility. The low caste status of a person is not a bar to social mobility, provided the man proves himself to be austere and religious.

The case of the late Shivaramavadhuta, a Talawari, comes under this category. To begin with he did not have a good reputation. Once he even ran off with a Kuruba woman shortly after she had borne a child. She had left a three-day-old baby

behind her. However, she returned home after a few days, but the man took to wandering. Finally he adopted an ascetic's life (although he was married—his wife is still alive in Kshetra). He went and served under the Jangam Eretata of Chelgurike in Bellary district. The Jangam blessed him for his devotion and gave him the name of Shivaramavadhuta. From there he moved to Hampi. After his death he has become a subject for devotion and centres have been built for him at Hampi, Hospet and Kshetra.

There is a Shivaramavadhuta Mutt (See Map 2A) in Kshetra some two furlongs south-east of the village. The cult has not attracted many people here, although it is quite popular at Hampi and Hospet. A pair of wooden sandals and a picture of Shivaramavadhuta are kept inside a small stone building in the Mutt at Kshetra. Sometimes groups of men visit the place and sing devotional songs here. The people of Kshetra do not comment on his frailties but admire his achievement. He has been able to achieve a venerated position after his death. The low caste status of Shivaramavadhuta certainly has not prevented people of higher castes from becoming followers of this cult.

I have indicated the place and role of Untouchable castes in the local social structure. The hierarchy among Untouchables is supported and kept alive by the caste Hindu preference for one Untouchable caste over another.

Caste-groups which form separate entities give rise to divisive forces. The necessity to live together breeds disputes as well as cooperation. Which of them will predominate depends upon many factors. Despite all these, the village remains a unit and a social reality. The unity of the village and the interdependence of its castes are ultimately paramount. This helps the village to function as a unit, not only against outsiders, but internally. The unity of the village and the interdependence of its castes prevail over narrow caste loyalties. Caste-groups do not see one another as opposed groups. There are many occasions on which the village functions as a unit and not as a locus of a number of separate castes. Intercaste economic, religious, and political interdependence is so complex that caste-groups do not consider commensality as an essential index of division or cohesion. Now I will present some of the specific sources of flexibility in the caste hierarchy which is directly related with the day-to-day living of the people in a close knit community.



### 7. Hierarchy and the Specific Sources of Flexibility.<sup>1</sup>

In a way Kshetra is a typical when compared with other villages and the general pattern of inter-caste relationships that normally exist. The absence of intense caste rigidities in Kshetra may be linked with certain special local conditions, namely the prepondance of Lingayats and the liberal ethics that goes with Veerasaivism. Secondly, the Kshetra Linga temple being a regional cult centre attracts people of different castes and their participation in the temple festivities reduces caste rigidities, for a short duration of time. Precisely because of these factors and perhaps other conditions, it is important to analyse the sources of flexibility. As local conditions influence the hierarchy to a large extent, any generalizations that are drawn on that basis have to be treated as variables rather than as certainties applicable to other areas. I shall, however, analyse in detail, in the chapters on Lingayat sectarianism and the temple cult, how in fact, these two processes account for lesser caste rigidities locally. Here I am content to point out the specific sources of flexibility mostly as it obtains in Kshetra.

I have already indicated that the ritual status and commensal relationships between caste-groups help to uphold the hierarchy to some extent. So it would be worth while to discuss in detail commensal behaviour between groups, and where and how it is reflected in day-to-day life.

Vegetarianism and teetotalism are usual among high caste Hindus. Eggs are considered akin to meat and looked upon with disfavour by elders. But the younger generation of Kshatriyas provided exceptions. They asserted that the observance of vegetarianism and teetotalism is a deviation from their traditional norm, in that the Kshatriyas as a fighting caste, ought to eat meat and drink liquor. The Kshatriyas of Kshetra 'Sanskritized' their food habits concurrently with their change in role when they took over control of the temple.<sup>2</sup> However, individuals at the present time have begun to break with this tradition.

Vegetarianism and teetotalism as characteristics of high caste

1. I use the phrase 'specific sources of flexibility, in the sense that the rules are sometimes broken or evaded.
2. Srinivas, 1952. Accounts for the military traditions of Coorgs who eat meat and drink alcohol. In contrast *Amma Coorgs* came under the influence of Brahmanical religion and are today strict vegetarians who also abstain from liquor. pp. 33-34.



Hindus often do not exist in practice in Kshetra. A few years ago, a Lingayat man died of over-drinking. When I was in the field a Lingayat from the neighbouring village who owned a flour-mill in Kshetra was an addict, and was suspected of eating meat in his Talawari mistress's house. Another local Lingayat, also a drunkard, was caught while dealing in illicit liquor and he paid a fine of Rs. 15/- in the Harapanahalli court.

Foods have been classified into *pakka* and *kachcha*. Anthropologists have reported from other parts of India that food cooked in ghee (clarified butter) is pure and uncontaminated, and therefore it is accepted by members of the higher castes from the hands of members of the lower castes,<sup>1</sup> while ordinary food cooked in water (and salt according to Mayer, A. 1960) is *kachcha* and not acceptable.

The fine distinction between *pakka* and *kachcha* food does not exist in Kshetra. Ghee is a rarity, used only as a delicacy. The available milk supply was mostly consumed by local tea shops. Many families have developed a regular habit of tea-drinking. The remainder of the milk, made into curd (Yogurt), is in great demand in the village and people consume a lot of curd and butter-milk with every meal. The two main meals consist of jowar rotti (dry pancake) and rice.

The Brahmins and Kshatriyas who used to buy milk, curd and butter, always complained of its rarity and dearness these days. For a decade it has become increasingly difficult to get good supplies of milk and milk products in the village, as a lot of milk is sold to hotels for tea-making. The lack of grazing grounds probably accounts for the fact that milk supplies are small and irregular in Kshetra. This also holds good for food prepared with ghee, for few villagers can afford it. In a number of sweet dishes—such as *Holige* made from *dhal*, where it is fried—groundnut or gingelly oil are commonly used and not ghee. One or two tea-spoonfuls of ghee are put on the food as it is served out for eating.

While clarifying butter a pinch of salt is always put in it. A pinch of salt makes things tasty and lasting. Most of my informants told me that a little salt is put even in sweet preparations. Informants from North India also told me that salt is put in ghee. Then it is virtually impossible to conceive of food which is devoid

1. Hutton J. H. 1946, *Caste in India*, pp. 64-5

Mayer A. 1960, *Caste and Kinship in Central India*. p. 33

of salt, for salt is put in ghee itself. Thus according to Mayer's report from Central India, food prepared in ghee is not strictly pakka food.

The Hindu kitchen and its pots are always considered pure. Even the lowest caste, such as the Madigas in Kshetra, would not allow people of a higher caste to enter their kitchen or see their cooking. To some extent caste-groups having commensality can enter one another's kitchens but even this would be avoided where possible. The family, extended family, kin and affines, lineage members and members of the sub-caste may enter one's kitchen freely. But at the caste-group level such as among the Veerasaivas as a whole as distinct from the sub-castes within it, the movement is already restricted and it is not possible at the inter-caste level even where interdining is practised.

Fruit and milk have always been offered and accepted among castes which do not normally interdine. Fried or baked food articles such as pancakes, parched rice and puffed rice are today accepted between groups which do not interdine, while coffee and tea are replacing milk. Indeed, the number of small teashops run in the houses of Lingayats and the two bigger teashops also run by Lingayats at the bus stand cater for all castes in the village. The Untouchables are served in special glasses reserved for their use only.

The use of china and glassware<sup>1</sup> is increasing, and probably it is loosening the rigidity in commensal relations among castes. Food and drink served in china plates and cups are not only attractive, after the fashion of the town teashop, but can be served out to all castes. The distinctions of polluting and non-polluting do not exist in the use of chinaware, as they do with metal vessels. These days villagers are keen to acquire chinaware, preserving and displaying it when occasion arises. Chinaware has become a symbol of prestige and has come to reflect urban cultural values. Metal cups get uncomfortably hot to touch if hot liquid is poured into them. China and glassware have a definite advantage over them. Moreover metal cups get greasy, whereas china and glassware are easy to clean. Many of my high caste Hindu informants told me that "visiting hotels and using chinaware there have definitely relaxed commensal rigidity

1. The commensal rule is one of the important criteria in marking off one caste from another. But the use of china dishes and glassware on formal as well as informal occasions has provided an integrating mechanism, which helps to overcome the rigid commensal rules among different castes.

among castes. One "never knows how many hands pass over a cup and a plate in an hotel".

Smoking groups do not exist as they do in the North India where the *hukka* is smoked. The villagers who smoke beedis and cigarettes, irrespective of caste, occasionally ask one another for a gift of a beedi or a cigarette and smoke it. There are groups which play cards. They always bet on the results of the game for tea and snacks, and take them at the teashops. The groups which sometimes undertake a 'friendly bet' such as eating large quantities of a particular dish or plantains, entertain the individual winner and his friends to tea and snacks in the teashops. The village drama groups which normally involve Lingayats and non-Lingayat and sometimes even people from the Twice-born castes, can be seen eating and drinking together in the local teashop. In short all these activities involve more than one caste.

Betel is offered irrespective of caste, but orthodox people would not readily accept lime (*chunam*) from all. People are as much deterred by the fact that fingers dipped in lime are put into mouths, the remainder being returned to the box, as by the fact that lime is mixed with water and therefore not acceptable. A process of rationalization is discernible because hygiene rather than religious principles are being emphasized by the villagers. Snuff passes from one hand to another irrespective of caste.

"Jaggery and oil could be accepted from the hands of a Madiga. It is not polluting", said one of my Banajiga informants. When customers buy from a grocer's shop, they always have the opportunity to select things. Things are not loaded with ideas of purity and pollution at the stage of buying, but rather they are considered in terms of good or bad quality. But once these things reach home, they acquire this character. People say, "the rice bought in the shop becomes pure at home (*angadi akki manege meesalu*)"

Most villagers carry water from the river for drinking and cooking purposes. Since the river is perennial, people simply walk into it three or four feet from the bank and fill their pots. Members of all castes as well as washermen wash clothes in the river. This is done along a strip of land two furlongs in length, where the bank of the river is shallow. It is only in one place that the river becomes fordable during the summer months and only around this area do the boatmen ply their boats which serve all castes.

Steep banks and swift currents force people to use the river



only in certain spots, which are used irrespective of caste." Indeed a Veerasaiva saying is that water never gets contaminated, and one major characteristic of water is to clean and cleanse without distinction among the people using it. Similarly the lingam never gets polluted. It is always in a pure state for impurity is destroyed instantaneously by the power of the lingam, and hence it has no pollution (*Gangege shilavilla, lingakke hole illa.*). The above notions could be taken as being partly responsible for liberalising the attitude of the people in Kshetra.

The common village well, whose water is declared to be the best available in the village, is used by all the three Untouchable castes as well as by the Lingayats and other castes in the vicinity ; and of course by the two teashops in the bus stand.

The cult of Kshetra Linga maintains that votaries serving as *Goravas*—people dedicated to the Kshetra Linga deity—should accept food offered by the pilgrims. No one is asked about his caste affiliation when rows of *Goravas* sit in front of the temple. Indeed, the pilgrims go on giving food during festivals. Nevertheless, the Untouchable *Gorava* line was a little removed, so that it sat apart from the caste Hindu line. Many *Goravas* assured me that it was impossible for them to find out the caste and the place of the pilgrim who offered them food as there was so much confusion owing to over-crowding in the temple premises during festive occasions. It was only occasionally that a very conscientious pilgrim would declare his caste before serving out food. The container into which food is put, I am told, has the mystical power of purifying what it receives.

The above information on the everyday life of the villagers in Kshetra is offered as evidence that rigidity of relations between castes is frequently reduced by the practical necessities of daily life. Let us now turn to consider how sex differences and the practice of Untouchability affect the structure in Kshetra.

Women in general have less chance to relax their commensal behaviour than men. No woman goes to the village teashops, although she can always get tea and snacks from a teashop by sending little boys or girls to fetch things for her. Further, teashops cannot busy themselves asking the caste status of their customers when traffic flows into the village during the observance of major festivals and most full-moon days at the temple. The introduction of a bus service has certainly gone a long way in relaxing commensal rules, as well as facilitating the free movement of men and women.

In Kshetra parties of women from the neighbourhood go to the river to wash clothes and fetch water. This affords a good opportunity for gossip. One could hardly miss the sight of women carrying headloads of water-pots to which are wound the washed clothes, homeward bound and cheerfully talking to their companions. This involves many caste-groups. Besides, women also get together in the neighbourhood after their dinner during the slack season from January to May when they have little work in the fields. Since castes there are interspersed, there is no inducement for women of particular castes to separate themselves from the rest. I saw many Lingayats and Kshatriya women mingling with one another.

The beginning of the slack season is also the start of the village-deity festivals in the vicinity of Kshetra. Women and children who go to these places on bullock carts often take their friends from other castes with them.

Most Lingayat women who work side by side with Untouchables and other labourers in the field can hardly observe spatial distance. Labourers mostly carry their own food but not water. Those masters who have engaged them for the day always pour out water into their hands from a common supply, as they carry a large vessel of water in a bullock cart.

The crowd that gathers and sits in the village square to witness dramas could hardly observe rules of either distance or contact pollution, and men and women do not sit segregated either. The first-comers occupy the best places. They bring their own mats, spread them on the floor and sit on them. There is no reservation of places on the basis of caste or sex.

A local drama group had recruited male actors from a number of castes. The director of the drama, a Panchala, explained to me that it was talent and not caste status that was taken into consideration. Around 1956 a caste-Hindu coached the local Madigas, and they enacted a play on the stage. When I visited a neighbouring village in January 1960, the Headman, a Lingayat, proudly announced a Madiga drama group in his village. They were patronized by the village officers and encouraged by the village audience. People from Kshetra also went to see this drama.

During Moharram and other village deity festivals, which are occasions for large gatherings in the temple premises and elsewhere, one cannot miss the sight of Madigas and other Untouchables pushing through the crowds. It cannot be said that Madigas are made to observe 'distance-pollution' because they live in a separate



colony. The visit of a higher officer, like the Deputy Commissioner or the Assistant Commissioner, always means more work for the Madiga sweepers of the Panchayat Board in Kshetra. The sweepers used to sweep round about the Rest House every day, when officers camped and also they used to erect a temporary lavatory for the officer's use. However, two permanent lavatories were built near the Rest House during February 1960. The important point here is that they often supplied water from the well for the officer's bath and other necessities. What is more surprising is that the village Headman, Accountant and President, who waited upon the officer, used the same water as supplied to the officer by the Madigas at the behest of local officials themselves.

Local card players always gathered in spare houses, cattle sheds or temple premises. I knew two Kanchaveera youths who used to play cards. An Untouchable linesman of the Electricity Department had crowds of card players in his shed as the shed was off the beaten track of the police and village elders, where they could also 'burn the midnight oil' or rather use the electric light with which the shed was supplied. The linesman, an unmarried youth, used to address the local caste-Hindu co-workers in the second person singular. They knew him to be an Untouchable but no one objected to this.

Untouchables enter the temple, but stay on the verandah. Lingayats and Kshatriyas told me that they would not object to Untouchables entering the temple. But they only lack the moral courage. They are generally dirty and the habit of eating carrion and beef which is practised among the Madigas deters them from going near the deity. I know an Untouchable M.L.C. (Member of the Mysore Legislative Council) whose family and friends were taken right inside the temple by Kshatriya youths during the 1960 February festival. Untouchable officials probably have always enjoyed this privilege on their visits to Kshetra, on or off duty, since the Kshatriyas endeavour to know and keep in touch with all classes of visiting officials, irrespective of caste.

I have seen Untouchables entering and squatting on the verandah of a household. Depending upon the caste status and degree of intimacy he has with a person, a householder would always offer a plank or a mat to a visitor or at least make him sit on an elevated place. Untouchables are not entertained like this, unless by chance they are forced to occupy an elevated place to make room for the movement of other persons.



### 3. Cross-Cutting Ties and the Unity of the Village

The theoretical rigidity which one might assume from examining the hierarchical arrangement of castes, is in practice considerably reduced. Daily life forces the caste-groups to co-operate with one another. Economic activities, religious factors and the physical environment supplement one another and help to reduce the difference among caste-groups. The life-cycle ceremonies are not primarily the concern of an individual household. In Kshetra they also involve participation by other castes. Similarly some of the economic and religious observances bring about village-wide participation. Thus many factors cut across caste barriers and make for the unity of the village.

Birth, naming, girls' puberty ceremonies, and weddings bring a good number of people together. Such ritual collaboration certainly cuts across caste barriers. I could demonstrate this from two girls' puberty ceremonies and a Cheluvadi wedding which I attended. These were not homogeneous gatherings of kin and caste, but included men and women of other castes from different parts of the village. The Kurubas and Talawaris were busy distributing betel to the audience, which consisted of Kshatriyas and Lingayats in the case of the Cheluvadi wedding.

The Madiga women, who are known to sing well, especially puberty songs and folksongs, were sought after by caste Hindu householders. I know a Lingayat family which invited Madiga women for the puberty ceremony of their daughter and another Lingayat family invited them to sing folksongs. In return for the singing they were given tea and betel leaves. There is no permanent ritual or economic ties which interlink the castes in these situations. But still different caste-groups come together in the pursuit of joint aims.

Except where they are Brahmins or Kshatriyas, women may accompany a corpse to the burial ground. A death among the Veerasaivas is an occasion when each household, irrespective of its relationship with the dead man's house, is represented by at least one member who accompanies the corpse to the burial ground. Once the corpse is disposed of, mortuary rites do not necessitate large scale participation, since there are no large funeral feasts given among the Veerasaivas. The 1960 April elections to the Village Panchayat Board nearly resulted in sharp divisions among the Lingayats in Kshetra. But the death of X, an important Lingayat elder, during June 1960, brought the whole community together.

A death can also cut across caste barriers. I know one instance of a Lingayat man who accompanied a Kuruba corpse. The village youths said jokingly that "Y washes his clothes only when there is a death in the village". After the burial people take a bath in the river and wash their clothes. There was an element of truth in what the village youths used to say. When questioned if he would attend on an Untouchable corpse, Y told me, "I would not mind, for what was there to fear? A dead body is like a dry leaf. It is not polluting to accompany a corpse and put a heap of earth on the grave. To attend a funeral is also the work ordained by God and one would be serving God by attending a funeral. It is the work of God Shiva (*Shivana bitti*) and He would be pleased by it".

In Kshetra there is no special burial ground although the Veerasaiva married dead, and the Muslims and the Pinjaris have their own grave-yards. All other castes either burn or bury the dead along the banks of the river. Indeed, dead children of all castes in the village are buried in one place near the village.

Festivals celebrated in Kshetra may be divided into three categories, namely, the local, regional and all-India festivals. Although they overlap, a classification into categories facilitates understanding. Agricultural rites and village-deity festivals can be considered as purely local as it is only the village people who are concerned with them. A festival with a regional spread involves people from other villages, and may even be attended by people of one or two cultural areas. The festivals connected with the Kshetra Linga temple, for instance, are regional in character, in so far as they are attended by people from the neighbouring states of Andhra and Maharashtra. Festivals like *Dasara* and *Dipavali* are celebrated all over India and hence they could be described as all-India festivals.

Some twenty major festivals are celebrated in Kshetra throughout the year. About eight of them are of the all-India category, while another four are concerned with local agricultural rites. The rest of them come under the local temple. Since most festive occasions centre around the Kshetra Linga temple and draw pilgrims of many castes from outside the village, the caste-groups do not act as a unit either economically, or ritually much less with regard to commensality. There is a widespread network of ties cutting across caste barriers. I will discuss the significance of the Kshetra Linga temple ceremonies in Chapter Five.

There are certain village-deity festivals, such as those of Basavanna for the Veerasaivas, Durugamma for the Kurubas,



Mariyamma for the Madigas and Moharram for the Muslims. These are a success because of their village-wide relevance and participation by all castes. I know that Brahmins sent coconuts to the Durugamma temple during the festival, though Durugamma is not their caste or family deity. But living in the same village they feel uncomfortable if they do not observe and venerate other deities which are exclusively worshipped by some castes. The whole village participated in the Muslim festival of Moharram and sent offerings of jaggery to "God". Hence Moharram had more the character of a village-festival than a narrow communal one. A Talawari participant summed it up: 'all gods are essentially one and the same'.

On all public occasions, when the village acts as a unit, for instance when they offered worship to the 'Rain God' (*Male Mallappa*), during September 1960, when Kshetra was threatened with a drought, contributions in kind and cash were made by all castes. The local Lingayats cooked food in the temple premises and served all castes who participated in the ceremony. Precedence based on caste status could not be properly observed during such communal gatherings. The Lingayats went on serving people as they lined up to eat in the open, with thick clouds hanging overhead, and the cool breeze indicating a downpour of rain at any moment.

The demarcation on such occasions is not so much between Lingayats and non-Lingayats as between the Twice-born who did not come to eat, and the Untouchables who stayed slightly behind to receive food. During the celebrations, the Untouchable Madiga and Kanchaveera women were active participants, when the procession went from one shrine to another in the village, singing songs in honour of the Rain God. A threatened drought affects the labourer more immediately than the farmer who employs him. So the former are naturally anxious and participate in the worship fully.

In a predominantly agricultural society like India, where agriculture is largely unmechanized, the interdependence of local castes is striking and very important especially in agricultural operations. Agricultural families with only one pair of plough cattle cannot carry on certain agricultural operations successfully. Further, particular crops can be sown only during particular periods. The shortness of the sowing period makes it difficult to manage with only one pair of bullocks. As one pair goes ahead sowing seed, the furrows should be closed from behind; so a second pair is necessary.



Not many agricultural households have more than a pair of bullocks. So most of them enter into a relationship whereby two agricultural families co-operate with one another during the sowing season. The arrangement may continue for one agricultural year or for several years, so that the ties become enduring. This again cuts across caste barriers. In Kshetra a few Lingayat families have such ties with Kurubas.

Rigidity and flexibility of the principles governing caste ranking are like the two sides of a coin. Theoretical rigidity is invaded by practical necessity to make the system flexible as is described above. Sometimes practical necessity itself may induce rigidity in so far as it might help to safeguard one's interests. Viewed from this angle commensality is not a very reliable criteria of caste ranking. Many factors enter to complicate the situation. Although commensal rules help to maintain caste distinctions and uphold the hierarchy in a general way, they do not necessarily account for the rigidity of the system. I have shown how different factors enter into inter-caste relationships and modify them. Many people told me that rigid commensal rules are a stumbling block to inter-caste friendship. Friends belonging to separate castes treat one another to food and drink privately if they cannot do so publicly.

The principle of endogamy of castes and sub-castes tends to retain caste barriers and keeps the distinction rigid. Caste-group endogamy is distinct from the economic and political inter-relationship among caste-groups. Whereas the former tends to draw a line of demarcation, the latter balances it by a network of ties between caste-groups. Kroeber is not entirely wrong when he emphasizes caste endogamy as an important factor contributing to the persistence of caste. But neither is Leach justified in shifting the emphasis from caste endogamy to economic factors, when he says, "Caste is a system of interrelationship and every caste in a caste system has its special privileges".<sup>1</sup> The sort of economic determinism which Leach is seeking to establish as a crucial factor in the study of caste systems is equally one-sided. "Economic roles are allocated by right to closed minority groups of low social status; members of high-status 'dominant castes', to whom the low-status groups are bound, generally form a numerical majority and must compete among themselves for the services of individual members of the

1. Leach, E. R. 1960 'Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan', *Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, No. 2, p. 10.

lower 'caste'.<sup>1</sup> The interrelationship between caste-groups in Kshetra cannot be ascribed to economic factors alone. The economic factor is one out of the many bonds which influence the system.<sup>2</sup>

Economic and political interests, and individual idiosyncracies, particularly marked by shifting political alliances, are becoming increasingly important in reducing the rigidity among caste-groups in one set of circumstances, while in another context it is also increasing the caste consciousness of particular caste-groups as against others. However, universal adult suffrage, and elections to offices in the villager have given every village some notion of democratic government, if not a sense of equality. Wider contacts and education drive home to people that caste distinction is a major feature of rural India, which is bound to disappear only very slowly. The situation in Kshetra is far more flexible than in Kerala or other parts of South India so far studied by anthropologists.

To what extent can Veerasaivism, with its emphasis on following a vocation, account for a less rigid system, or the flexibility of the local system be attributed to the liberal ethics of veerasaivism?

An analysis of the cult of the Kshetra Linga temple will shed further light on the somewhat free inter-caste behaviour. The two dominant castes, the Veerasaivas and the Kshatriyas, have worked towards it from different directions. That liberal ethics has been inherent in Veerasaiva ideology from the very start may be illustrated by the inclusion of non-Lingayats within the Veerasaiva fold. The Twice-born, and hence the Kshatriyas of Kshetra, are in theory opposed to this. But the temple cult which the Kshatriyas supervise draws together followers of different castes as devotees of the deity. The diverse castes which participate in the worship make the cult unique and caste differences are temporarily forgotten or brushed aside. These two themes will form the subject of the chapters that follow.

### **The usage of Sanskritisation.<sup>3</sup>**

In this book, I take 'Sanskritisation' to represent 'ideal Hinduism' (like Weber's ideal types). Ideal Hinduism would include the complex phenomena of Sanskritisation described by Srinivas so

1. Ibid ; p. 6

2. Parvathamma, C. 1969. Loc. Cit,

3. Srinivas, M.N. 'A Note on Sanskritisation and Westernisation' in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 4. August '56.

far, plus the attributes of '*Varna-Asrama Dharma*' (caste and stages of life).<sup>1</sup>

"The agents of Sanskritisation were (and are not always Brahmins."<sup>2</sup>

This being so, Brahmins and other Twice-born castes, according to my definition, are 'pro-Sanskritic' (but in varying degrees i.e., some being more Sanskritic than others), approximating to the 'ideal type'. Individuals who try to break through the 'tradition' tend to 'de-Sanskritise'.

"Brahminization is subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritisation though at some points Brahminization and Sanskritisation are at variance with each other."<sup>3</sup>

The villagers, whenever they come across a person trying to copy the Brahmanical 'style of life' frequently say, that he or she acts like a Brahmin (*Brahamanara hage aduvudu*). Depending upon the person's reputation, this may be a mark of appreciation or derision. I will give an example of each case to illustrate how it operates.

'C', a Talawari, and a minor official in the local Electricity Department was very punctilious. He cooked his meals himself, and never ate his lunch without taking a bath. He used to observe a partial fast on Saturdays and visit the Kshetra Linga temple to offer worship. Ritual scrupulousness pervaded his activities. He was admired as a good and modest man by the Kshatriya youths and others in the village.

In contrast to 'C', 'B', a middle-aged Kanchaveera from Kshetra, who had served a ten-year sentence for murder in the District Jail was released, and came back to the village during June 1960. He used to dress in *khaddar* and wear a 'Gandhi cap'. He pretended that he had forgotten his mother tongue (Kannada), and he always appeared smartly dressed. He boasted a lot about his good experiences in the jail and his polished manners. Villagers and Kshatriya youths in particular called him ridiculously 'jail-made-Brahmin'.

The above two instances are not sufficient to demonstrate—although they serve my purpose here—the complex set of factors which are involved in a situation when a man's 'Brahmin stereotype' behaviour is admired or criticised adversely. It may be caste status,

1. Radhakrishnan, S. 1960, *The Hindu View of Life*, Unwin Books, London. pp. 59-66 for a discussion on the stages of life and Chapter 4 on Caste System.
2. Srinivas, M.N. 1956, Loc. Cit., pp. 481.



or food habits, or maintaining ritual purity or even personal cleanliness as having a daily bath and wearing clean clothes that calls for the attention of the villagers.

Further in this instance both 'C' and 'B' are of low caste, and are neither vegetarians nor teetotallers. But 'C' ranks above the 'pollution barrier', while 'B' is an Untouchable. The structural distance between an Untouchable and a Brahmin is marked and so also is the difference in their 'expected' behaviour. The caste Hindus could easily perceive the attempts of 'B' to imitate and show off 'Brahmanical behaviour'. The idiosyncracies of 'B' and his overt efforts to impress people evoked ridicule if not antagonism. 'C', on the other hand did not show extremes of behaviour nor did he make overt attempts to initiate the 'Brahmin stereotype'. He also drew public attention, but it was of a different kind.

Where people imitate Brahmins and try to impress others by such exhibitionism—as in the case of 'B'—they allow themselves to be ridiculed. In contrast, individuals like 'C', who approximate to the Brahmin stereotype for its own sake, and do not assert superiority or exhibit themselves before others, are admired and respected or at least not adversely criticised in public. Such is the case of the Boad outcaste schoolmaster in Bisipara.<sup>1</sup>

'A Sanskritic' and 'non-Sanskritic' will be used to describe groups entirely alien to Hinduism, such as Muslims and Christians. Here again, the Indian Christians may be described as 'a-Sanskritic'; while the European missionaries are 'non-Sanskritic'. I am delineating the different usages, although I have not followed this particular usage in my book.

Marriage, the status of women, and kinship among the Brahmins, are analysed by Srinivas and are contrasted with the practice of non-Brahmanical castes. The three concepts overlap, and in analysing my data on the Veerasaivas of Kshetra, I have dwelt on these and connected topics which lead me to characterise the Veerasaiva ritual as 'anti-Sanskritic'.

"The Lingayats of South India have been a powerful force for the Sanskritisation of the customs and rites of many low castes of the Karnatak. The Lingayat movement was anti-Brahmanical in tone and spirit."<sup>2</sup>

The phrase 'anti-Brahmanical in tone and spirit' tends to over-

1. Bailey, F.G. 1957, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 222.

2. Srinivas M.N. 1956 *Loc. Cit.*, pp. 482.

look the practical aspects of the movement. In addition, two opposing principles are juxtaposed when the movement is described as "anti-Brahmanical" but "a powerful force for Sanskritisation". To resolve this contradiction, it is necessary to analyse, 'why and how' the Veerasaiva movement is (and was) anti-Brahmanical. I have attempted to outline this in my chapter on Lingayat sectarianism. In fact, the leaders of the movement condemned some aspects of Sanskritic Hinduism. The ritual practice of the Veerasaivas is clearly 'anti-Sanskritic' as opposed to 'pro-Sanskritic'. It is only in this way that Veerasaivism could be described as an anti-Brahmanical movement.

The term 'Sanskritisation' is a cultural concept.<sup>1</sup> Since the 'ritual culture' of the Veerasaivas (if I may put it that way) is different from 'Brahmanical ritual culture', it is appropriate to describe the Veerasaivas as 'anti-Sanskritic' as well as 'anti-Brahmanical', rather than 'anti-Brahmanical but 'pro-Sanskritic'.

Srinivas states that "Sanskritisation is no doubt an awkward term"<sup>2</sup> and "it should be discarded quickly and without regret"<sup>3</sup> once the term is more a hindrance than a help in analysis.

I choose to retain the term here, as I am not concerned with a general discussion on 'Sanskritisation'. I have attempted only a further delineation of the term in so far as it facilitates analysis of my data from Kshetra.

1. Srinivas M.N. 1956 Loc. Cit., pp. 490.

2. " " " " " " 481.

3. " " " " " " 495.

## CHAPTER IV

## LINGAYAT SECTARIANISM

THE CHAPTER on social stratification in Kshetra lays bare the nature of the cleavage that exists between the high Hindu castes, namely, the Twice-born, and the Veerasaivas. In brief, they run parallel to each other, as well as in relation to non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes. I have also pointed out the lines of divergence between the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas very broadly. Below, I will describe the Veerasaiva practices and tenets, pointing out the particular differences between the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas.

I shall deal with the Brahmins only very briefly and indirectly through the Veerasaivas. Writers on the Indian caste system are agreed that the top rank is always occupied by the Brahmins.<sup>1</sup> They have also described the Brahmanical way of life.<sup>2</sup> A detailed account on this score, therefore, is beyond the scope of the present discussion. The points of difference which I will outline, should suffice to mark off the Veerasaivas from the Twice-born.

1. Gough, K.G. 1955, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 36-62.  
Hutton, J.H. 1946, *Caste in India*.  
Srinivas, M.N. 1952 *Religion & Society Among the Coorgs of South India*.  
Stevenson, H.N.V. 'Status Evaluation in the Hindu Caste System'  
*J.R.A.I.* Vol. 84, 1954.
2. Dubois, A.J. 1862, *A Description of the Character, Manners and Customs of the People of India*.  
Stevenson, Mrs. S. 1920, *The Rites of the Twice-born*.



The Veerasaivas form a hierarchy with castes and sub-castes among themselves.<sup>1</sup> In Kshetra they are represented by four castes with a number of sub-castes and I have arranged them hierarchically in the following chart.

## CHART 2

- |                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Jangam                  | 3. Potter Lingayat |
| 2. a) Panchachara Lingayat | 4. Barber Lingayat |
| b) Handerahuta             |                    |
| c) Banajiga                |                    |
| d) Shiva Simpiga           |                    |
| e) Sadaru                  |                    |

The Veerasaivas as a group stand in opposition to the Twice-born in many ways. The two groups neither interdine nor intermarry. They do not accept ritual services from one another. They are mutually exclusive, though both of them profess vegetarianism and teetotalism. A Jangam—the priestly caste of the Veerasaivas—serves a wider range of castes and a greater number of people than a Brahmin in Kshetra. In this connection I have pointed out the overall closeness between some non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes and Veerasaiva practices and tenets. Let me recall the following examples: the Kuruba converts to Veerasaivism, the change of spiritual teacher among the Kurubas; the Barikes' giving up of third day mortuary rites in order to obtain a Jangam's services, and their dispensing with a Brahmin's services.

The castes which receive a Jangam's ritual services may be distinguished from the castes which receive a Brahmin's service. Life-crises, such as birth and death in a family, cause pollution among all Twice-born and non-Lingayat castes which accept the Brahmin's services. They all undergo purification at the end of the pollution period. Pollution as opposed to ritual purity, is denied in Veerasaiva philosophy. In practice, these notions are less elaborated among the Lingayats than among Brahmins. Hence castes receiving a Jangam's services tend to follow the Veerasaiva model. Those castes served neither by a Brahmin nor a Jangam, the Madigas and Kanchaveeras of Kshetra, are closer to the Veerasaiva than to the Brahmanical usage.

It will be sufficient to point out only a single difference between the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas here. A menstruating woman

1. Parvathamma, C. 1967. *The Social Structure of Lingayats: A Sectarian Caste of Mysore*.

among the Veerasaivas is not segregated and this is also the case with most non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes. The Twice-born, and other castes which accept a Brahmin's services, must segregate a menstruating woman for three days. The Veerasaiva practice is opposed to 'Sanskritisation', and hence to Brahmanical religion. This 'anti-Sanskritic', (not 'de-Sanskritic') practice points to differences and tendencies which could be marked off as anti-Brahmanical. Elaboration along these lines necessitates an internal structural analysis of the Veerasaivas.

There is a caste-like hierarchy among the Veerasaivas too. It indicates the diverse elements that have come to determine the relative status of each sub-caste within the general structure of Veerasaivism. Their anti-Brahmanical notions, such as non-recognition of ritual pollution during life crises and other situations is considered as a break from 'tradition'. Further, the Veerasaivas have long attracted the attention of the Western people, mainly the British administrators,<sup>1</sup> who have described them as "the puritans of the East". Non-recognition of ritual pollution probably provided an incentive to diversify economic activities among the Lingayats. In fact, agriculture, trade, and a variety of other occupations followed by the Veerasaivas to-day make them a unique caste-group including many occupational sub-castes, and this is at variance with Brahmanical Hinduism.<sup>2</sup> The notions of ritual purity and impurity have been a hindrance to economic activities in Brahmanical Hinduism. The Lingayats rose above the Brahmanical notions to regard 'work' as essential to earn a living.

The theme of the chapter is the analysis of the social structure of the Veerasaivas. This will not only highlight the points of variance between Brahmanical Hinduism, and Veerasaivism, but will also account for internal differences and sub-caste differences among the Veerasaivas. These sub-caste differences as will become clear later, emphasize minute distinctions rather than unify them as a group. In other words the cleavages between different sub-castes among the Lingayats of Kshetra are largely responsible for the continued dominance of the Kshatriyas. I shall therefore concen-

1, Francis, W. 1904. *Op. Cit.*, p. 69.

Enthoven, R.J. 1922 ; *Tribes and Castes of Bombay*.

Thurston, E. 1909, Vol. IV pp. 236-7.

2. Parvathamma, C. 1968, "The Socio-Economic Drive in Veerasaivism : the Saivite non-Brahmin caste-group of Mysore" VIIIth All India Sociological Conference (Paper read)

trate on and analyse the Veerasaiva social organization, although elaboration on the lines whether the Veerasaivas are puritans of the East would be a fascinating sociological analysis by itself.

Veerasaivism rebelled against the rigidity of Brahmanical religion. The leader of the movement was himself a Saiva Brahmin, but his supporters were recruited from all castes. The diverse castes, which united in the pursuit of a common religious goal, were only partly successful. It was anti-Brahmanical and fought against inequality of caste status. But the movement merely resulted in a further proliferation of the caste system.

### 1. Priesthood among the Lingayats and Brahmins—A Contrast

The Veerasaivas of Kshetra form four castes with a number of sub-castes within them (see Chart 2). The Jangams, the Lingayat potter and the Lingayat barber follow special occupations. To some extent the sub-castes in Division Two are named after professions, e.g., Banajigas normally are traders, and Shiva Simpigas follow tailoring as their caste occupation.

The Jangams are the priests among the Veerasaivas. Here I must indicate the differences between two major types of priesthood i.e., temple priesthood (*pujari*), as distinct from domestic priesthood (*purohit*), besides other varieties of priesthood. Worship in Brahmanical temples often involves the officiating priest in the recitation of Sanskrit *mantras*, while offering worship. This is not so in temples where Lingayats worship. Individual devotees go to the temple and offer worship when the temple priest is present. Otherwise they can always have access to the shrine, offer food and burn incense before the deity.

The basic duties of the priest in a Lingayat temple are similar. When the temple priest goes round for daily worship, if devotees come with offerings, he officiates for them. On Mondays and other festive occasions, Lingayats visit the temple to offer worship. The temple priest is normally present on such occasions, since his presence and officiating on such occasions is rewarding. He may retain part of the food offered to the deity, half a coconut broken before the deity, and will probably get a small sum of money as his ceremonial fee.

Temple priesthood among the Lingayats does not involve any recital of sacred verses or other special qualifications. The priest normally takes a bath before he goes to worship the deity in the



temple. The priest in the Basavanna temple at Kshetra belongs to the Panchachara sub-caste and is illiterate. Since every Lingayat is expected to worship his personal lingam worn on the body, before each meal, he will normally know the mode of worship. How to worship a deity in a temple is common knowledge. Any Lingayat could be a priest. In fact many Lingayat families in the past, were connected with the Kshetra Linga temple. Such families still go by the title *Panchama Pujari*, *Shiva Puje*, and so on. My point here is that temple priesthood among Veerasaivas is not confined to Jangams.

I have not come across a Jangam priest. Jangams are either heads of monasteries or domestic priests. In either capacity they collect ceremonial fees (*dakshine*) from disciples. Jangams in the villages also beg. A Jangam receives a begging bowl (*Jolige*) during his initiation. He should beg from three to five houses, while the initiation is in progress. The grain and money collected are given as a fee to the officiating Jangam.

The initiate may return the begging bowl or retain it. If he retains the begging bowl, it is imperative that he must go begging at least once a year during *Sravana*, a Hindu festival celebrated during July-August, and beg from a minimum of five households. Many Jangams go begging in the country throughout the year, especially on Mondays, which is the day sacred to Lord Shiva. These privileges prevent a Jangam from becoming a temple priest and also differentiate him from Brahmin priests who do not go begging.

It is the ritual role that a Jangam plays in connection with the life-crises ceremonies of birth, girls' puberty, and death that puts him in opposition to the Brahmin domestic priest. The demarcation between temple priests and certain classes of domestic priests are marked among Brahmins. For instance, a Brahmin who directs mortuary rites is not usually sought to officiate at other auspicious ceremonies. Brahmins who direct mortuary rites are known as Great Brahmins (*Maha Pattra Brahmanas*) in some parts of North India. Their status is not only considered inferior but slightly defiling, since they deal with matters connected with death.

In Kshetra there is only one Brahmin who is both a domestic priest as well as a priest in the Kshetra Linga temple. He does not normally direct mortuary ceremonies except in an emergency. A relative from the neighbouring village is invited to conduct death ceremonies. Among Brahmins, a person who conducts death cere-

monies is considered to contract a kind of pollution, of which he will rid himself later by going through a process of ceremonial purification.

The Jangams on the contrary, do not maintain this distinction. The same Jangam may be seen officiating at a wedding and later directing a funeral ceremony. Further, the Jangams maintain that they take away the burden of pollution from those people for whom they officiate, but they themselves are not affected by it. They are the agents effecting purification, and hence they never contract pollution.

I have pointed out the relative aloofness which a Brahmin domestic priest maintains with regard to his subject. He maintains this in order to keep his ritual purity. This emphasis on purity and status prevents a Brahmin from accepting food at all. On the other hand, the intimacy between a Jangam and his Lingayat disciples, at some stages of ritual observation, emphasizes equality and spiritual fraternity. Hence a Jangam and his disciple will partake of ceremonial food (*prasada*). A ritual dinner marks most ceremonies among Lingayats.

## 2. Jangams, the Priestly Caste of the Lingayats

A Jangam interdines with all ranks of Lingayats in Kshetra with the exception of barbers. Jangams also officiate for Kuruba, Barike, Talawari, washermen, and Cheluvadi in Kshetra. They are strict vegetarians and teetotallers. They belong to the Hire Mutt and come under *Kashi Peeta* (a spiritual throne at Banaras).

Veerasaivas uphold the myth of the existence of Five Great Spiritual Teachers (*Pancha Acharyas*) in all Yugas, and the Hindu timescale of *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dwapara* and *Kali*. To perpetuate the Veerasaiva faith, they established five great thrones at five different places. In *Kali Yuga*, Revanasidda is said to have established a throne at Balehalli, Marulusidda at Ujjini, Panditaradhya at Srisaila, Ekorama at Himavatkedara and Viswaradhya at Kashi.<sup>1</sup> These five are spiritual thrones headed by Jangams. Under each throne various Mutts have been established, with branch Mutts associated with local Jangams. The myth in short tries to establish that Veerasaivism is as ancient and as widespread as the Brahmanical religion itself. The time-scale and the places referred to in the myth are a reflection of this notion. To put it in another way, it is claimed

1. Murthy, M.R.S. 1942. *Vachana Dharma Sara* (In Kannada) p. 6.

that Veerasaivism is not a sectarian movement of the 12th century, but existed from earliest times.

The Jangams as a caste were given an exalted position during the 12th century by Basava and his followers, the exponents of the tenets of Veerasaivism. Basava stressed the importance of Guru, Linga and Jangama. Guru and Jangam are interdependent. A Jangam can be a Guru and not *vice versa*. "The spread of Veerasaivism assumed the existence of the Jangam caste."<sup>1</sup> The Jangams today occupy a key ritual position not only among the Lingayats but also among some non-Lingayat castes.

Veerasaivism tried to replace the worship of stable images of Linga (Sthavara Linga), established in Saivite temples, by 'Ista Linga'. I translate '*Ista Linga*' as 'personal linga'. The personal linga is always worn on the body of a Veerasaiva and is worshipped before each major meal.

A Jangam cannot direct all ceremonies. There are moreover certain restrictions and taboos which limit his assuming priestly duties. For instance, any inherent physical deformity, such as having one eye, will disqualify him. An initiated, married Jangam alone can assume a full ritual role on all ceremonial occasions. A widower can also officiate at ceremonies.

The initiation (*Iyyachara*) for Jangams is analogous to the sacred thread ceremony among the Twice-born. It consists in reciting the sacred text of five letters (*Panchakshari Mantra*) 'Salute to Shiva' *Na, Mah, Si, Va, Ya*, into the ears of the initiate. The initiate must not disclose this secret phrase to others. It is believed that a misfortune such as sickness or death will befall him if he did. An elderly Jangam with the status of a guru, normally holding some office in a Mutt, conducts the initiation ceremony. In addition to giving him the mantra, an initiate is instructed as regards general good behaviour and religious duty. Every male Jangam has to undergo initiation in order to be able to sit on a ceremonial seat (*gaddige*) whenever he performs a ritual duty.

The two major ritual acts which a Jangam performs on many ceremonial occasions for Lingayats consists in giving 'consecrated water' and 'ceremonial coconut water' (*padodaka and karunaprasada*). When a householder invites a Jangam on any ceremonial occasion, the latter will sit on a ceremonial seat. The Jangam washes his feet

1. Murthy, M.R.S. 1942. *Bhakti Bhandari Basavannanavaru* (In Kannada) p. 60.



with water and this water becomes consecrated (*padodaka*). This water is collected by the householder and a small quantity is drunk. After this the householder will 'worship the feet' of the Jangam (*padapuje*). Then the Jangam proceeds to prepare the 'ceremonial coconut water'. He pours the coconut water between his feet and this is collected in a plate. This is known as *karunaprasada*, which is partaken of by the Jangam and his Lingayat disciples. The ceremonial coconut water is never given to people other than Lingayats.

A Brahmin domestic priest on the contrary cannot assume both the above ritual roles while officiating for his subjects. The consecrated water that a Brahmin gives his subjects may consist of water purified with mantras and not water used for washing the feet. Even when *padapuja* is done to heads of mutts such as Sringeri or Madhwa, the water is not drunk as *padodaka* among the Brahmins. In fact scrupulous purity and physical distance are maintained by an officiating Brahmin priest. Hence it is unusual for him to allow his subjects to touch his feet, or wash and worship them.

At any rate, partaking of the ceremonial coconut water is impossible between a Brahmin priest and his subject. In a ritual situation a Brahmin priest acts as a medium and is therefore placed above his subjects. He is not a guru in the Veerasaiva sense. The status differentiation between a Brahmin priest and his subject is obvious. There is no situation or act which can bring the two together as equals. The differential ritual status rules out the possibility of equality and spiritual fraternity.

Among the Veerasaivas, a Jangam in the process of preparing and consuming 'ceremonial coconut water' to some extent identifies himself with the disciple. This ritual act emphasizes the unity and spiritual fraternity between a Jangam and his disciple. In fact he sips it and hands it over to his disciple. But before he sips it himself a Jangam worships his personal lingam by putting a few drops of the liquid on it. This represents the idea that a Jangam may on occasion be superior in status to the linga. He transcends the symbol of Shiva i.e., lingam, and for a moment stands on a par with Shiva himself. The supreme act in which the Jangam is identified with the God, symbolized in this ceremony, surpasses the whole Brahmanical conception of religion. As far as I know, this concept is alien to Sanskritic Hinduism.

A Jangam domestic priest is also conceived of as a temporary spiritual teacher when he is officiating for his Lingayat disciples. This is not so with a Brahmin domestic priest. It is for this reason that I have used 'subject' instead of 'disciple', where a Brahmin priest is officiating. The monastic heads (Mutts) alone are considered spiritual teachers among Brahmins. For instance, the Brahmins and Kshatriyas of Kshetra claimed the head of the Sringeri Mutt as their Spiritual Teacher.

The status of the local Brahmin priest officiating among the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas of Kshetra is nowhere near that of the head of the Sringeri Mutt. When a Brahmin Spiritual Teacher pays a ceremonial visit to his disciples he is done the honour of having his feet worshipped (padapuje). The water used for washing the feet becomes consecrated (padodaka). This water is symbolic and the water used for washing the feet is not sipped.<sup>1</sup> Of course the preparation and the partaking of ceremonial coconut water (karunaprasada) are beside the point. The ritual role-situation emphasizes the maintenance of scrupulous purity, disparity between the priest and his subject, and also discriminates between the sexes. A Brahmin woman cannot undertake most of the religious ceremonies independently. She is invariably associated with her husband on many ritual occasions and at other times the priest will direct the rituals. In contrast a Lingayat woman, irrespective of status, may become a disciple independently and undertake ritual observances.

In Kshetra, the Veerasaiva community as such does not have a single Spiritual Teacher as the Brahmins and Kshatriyas do. The Jangams of Kshetra claim the head of the Benares Mutt as their Spiritual Teacher. A single sub-caste like the Panchachara acknowledges some fifteen different Spiritual Teachers who are also heads of different Mutts.

In everyday life as well as on all ceremonial occasions, the role of a Jangam is very important among the Lingayats. It is not the heads of Mutts but the local Jangams who constantly figure in their relationship with the Lingayats. The former I call the 'family Spiritual Teacher' and the latter 'personal Spiritual Teacher.' Every Lingayat is a disciple of both. The family Spiritual Teacher

1. The best available descriptive Ethnographic material on Brahmanical Hinduism is, *The Rites of the Twice-Born* by Mrs. Stevenson, 1920. Unfortunately there is no information in the book on the particular rituals that I am describing here.

visits their disciples only occasionally, whereas a local Jangam is in constant touch with his Lingayat disciples. His presence and services as a domestic priest are of great importance to all Lingayats.

After initiation, a Jangam can get married or choose to remain celibate and become a Spiritual Teacher in a Mutt. An uninitiated Jangam may not marry, while an initiated unmarried Jangam is not usually allowed to direct funeral rites. It is a convenient fiction that a youngster would feel afraid at the sight of a corpse.

Among all Lingayats and some non-Lingayat castes a Jangam conducts corpse-worship by ceremonially placing his right foot on the head of a corpse before it is buried. However, one of my Jangam informants claimed that he was initiated but unmarried when plague broke out in Kshetra. Since he was the eldest Jangam available, his services were sought after to direct funeral rites and he could not evade it, while another informant told me that his father prevented him from doing so, as he was unmarried.

I have already mentioned that funeral rites among the Twice-born could be conducted only by certain Brahmins, while among Jangams this is not the case. Further a Brahmin's duty does not involve his coming in contact with the dead body, as a Jangam's does when he places his foot on it. Conducting rites connected with death are defiling, and a Brahmin priest directing them contracts some pollution. Although he acts as an intermediary and does not actually come in contact with the corpse, he undergoes purification once the ceremonies are over. His ritual status is lowered and generally he is not asked to conduct auspicious ceremonies such as weddings.

The Jangams, on the contrary, do not maintain this distinction between "good-sacredness and bad-scaredness."<sup>1</sup> A Jangam who directs funeral rites touches the corpse. After the disposal of the corpse, everyone, including the accompanying Jangam, bathes. Returning from the burial ground, the Jangam goes straight to the house of the dead person. He gives consecrated water and ceremonial coconut water to the kin of the dead and this concludes the funeral rites. The Jangam himself does not undergo any special purification before or after the ceremony. These roles of the Jangam will become clear, as I will discuss them below in relation to the Lingayats of Kshetra.

The Jangam caste as a whole appears homogeneous, but is not so in practice. It has functional sub-divisions correlated with

1. Srinivas M.N. 1952, *Op. Cit.*, p. 101.



different rankings. For instance a sub-division called Gandujolige Iyyappa, practices foretelling (*Kulagnana Heluvudu*) and Kante Iyyappa anoints a stone lingam with paste called *kante*. A personal linga is worshipped by its wearer before each meal, when water is invariably sprinkled on it. The kante covering protects it from wear and tear. Hereditary Jangams, i.e., those who act as domestic priests inter-dine with the above sub-divisions but do not intermarry.

The life-cycle ceremonies among the Jangams are similar to those of the Lingayats, which I will describe below. But there exists an exception which aims at maintaining the higher ritual status of the Jangams. All Lingayat sub-castes allow widow remarriage in spite of the lower status accorded to a widow as compared with a woman married only once. Widow remarriage is taboo to the Jangams.

I have already indicated how a Jangam could be a Spiritual Teacher to Lingayat disciples. Jangams describe their Lingayat disciples as '*Shisya makkalu*', pupil-cum-children (referred to as disciples), while the latter address them as guru i.e., teacher (Spiritual Teacher), or *Buddi* (Lord or Wise). It is for this reason that a Lingayat disciple does not seek the hand of a Jangam bride. It is considered immoral or even incestuous, to marry from the household of a Jangam, as he stands as spiritual father to the Lingayats. Even if a Lingayat did take a Jangam bride it is considered that it would not be a successful marriage.

There exists an inseparable ritual dependence of Lingayats on Jangams. Often a joint family of Jangams upon separation will informally divide the families of disciples amongst themselves. This satisfies the needs of both Jangams and Lingayats, since ritual rule is commensurate with economic reward. A Jangam combines in himself the dual roles of Jangam and guru (an important tenet of Veerasaivism) to meet all the ritual necessities of the Lingayats.

### 3. The Panchachara Lingayats—Status and Life-Cycle Ceremonies and the Role of the Jangam. A Further Contrast between the Veerasaivas and the Twice-Born.

The above general description is necessary as it sheds light on the vitally important role of a Jangam in the life-cycle and other ceremonies common to all Lingayats, but with special reference to the Panchachara sub-division in Kshetra.

Among all Lingayat sub-castes the Panchachara is regarded as

superior and nearest to the Jangam in ritual status. Hence it has special privileges. The name Pancha Acharya literally means 'Five Spiritual Teachers'. The members of Panchachara Lingayat sub-caste are, therefore, believed to be the immediate disciples of the five Jangams, who established the five Spiritual Thrones.<sup>1</sup>

A Panchachara man from a 'reputable family' (informants told me that one of the criteria for such a family is that there has been no widow remarriage in their lineage as far back as three ancestors) may be grafted on to a Jangam's family. He severs his ties with the Panchachara sub-caste, but enjoys superior ritual status, in that he may perform the tasks of a Jangam such as officiating during life crises and other ceremonial occasions after he has been initiated and can even become the head of a Mutt. Implicit in this social mobility is the possibility of attaining a higher status, both secular and spiritual.

The importance of a Jangam's services for all Veerasaivas means that each local group has a number of Jangams. As an insurance against any shortage of Jangams, and hence possible deprivation of ritual services, Panchachara man may be initiated into the Jangam order.

A Jangam may marry a Panchachara woman of reputable family. The reverse does not happen, the reason for which I have already stated. In this hypergamous marriage the Panchachara bride is given Diksha, i.e., she is initiated into the caste of the Jangams. After the wedding, she breaks off her intimate ties with her natal home. She can visit and stay with them, but she cannot eat from the same plate (as they often do) as her mother, brother or sister, nor can she wash plates used by people other than Jangams. She naturally becomes more punctilious in bathing and worshipping daily.

This degree of special mobility implies the existence of a number of barriers. A person aspiring to move upwards has necessarily to break off certain intimate social ties with his own natal and kin group, in addition to renouncing his membership of the caste-group. A person failing to observe the ethical code binding on the Jangams may be reverted to his previous status, whereby he may lose the privileges of officiating on ritual occasions. At any rate, in Kshetra, no Panchachara man has acquired Jangam status or lost it for having failed to observe the regulations. I have, however, heard of instances

1. See the myth on p. 89 for details.

of such mobility, especially in Mutts.

Individual Lingayats, while young, are dedicated by their parents for service in Mutts. Here they are given intensive religious training. Appointments to various positions in the Mutts are made by selecting candidates from among the dedicated ones. The selection of a candidate to become the head of a Mutt may require the formal consent of all Lingayat disciples of the Mutt. Such a candidate undergoes higher religious training, before taking charge of the Mutt.

The point I want to make here is that a Panchachara man moving into the Jangam's order, is in reality enhancing his secular and ritual status by occupying a position in a Mutt. Individuals who move upwards like this, may not really come back. For in the course of playing ritual roles, they can keep contact with and officiate and eat in Panchachara households, which is the core of their newly-acquired and superior ritual status. In order to maintain this higher status they may not marry Panchachara women, or can only marry under the special circumstances noted above, i.e., when women have been grafted on to the Jangam order. The problem of marriage may not arise at all, as most heads of Mutt are expected to remain celibate.

The most numerous single caste-group in Kshetra is the Panchachara sub-caste of Lingayats. They form the main agricultural class here. A Jangam serves them on the following ceremonial occasions.

A. When a baby is born, a Jangam is invited by the Lingayat house holder. The Jangam ceremonially ties a linga to the baby's neck. This is known as the 'Lingadharana' ceremony, which initiates the child into the Veerasaiva fold. Before tying the linga, the Jangam gives consecrated water. This is sipped by the mother, the baby and other members of the family, and then sprinkled everywhere in order to remove birth pollution. The Lingadharana ceremony takes place on the same day as the child is born, preferably soon after the mother and baby are washed. For the mother may eat only after the ceremony has been performed. Hence birth pollution, if it is observed, is reduced to the minimum and at the most it is merely a matter of a few hours.

In an emergency, e.g., if the Jangam who serves the family is absent, a substitute can officiate. Thus, for instance when a son was born to the Head Master of the local school in January 1960, a Jangam teacher in his school was asked to officiate in place of the family Jangam.

Lingayat informants told me that when it proves impossible to



secure a Jangam on the actual day of birth, the Lingadharana ceremony may be either postponed or brought forward, the expectant mother undergoing the rite on her own and her child's behalf. She receives the linga from the Jangam, keeps it safe and ties it herself to the child after it is born. This is to obviate the difficulty of procuring a Jangam in time. So birth pollution is here reduced to nil.

The Twice-born as well as those castes whose customs are modelled after the Twice-born, on the other hand segregate the mother and child for ten days. A midwife of a lower caste, or an elderly woman assists in bathing the mother and child in a special place but not in the bathroom inside the house. In Kshetra, a washerwoman acts as a midwife and assists among Brahmins and Kshatriyas. When a member of the family assists the mother and the child, she will have a purificatory bath every day and her movement in the house will be restricted. Purification from birth-pollution is effected on the eleventh day after the birth of a child, when the male members change their sacred thread and resume the worship of the family deity.

A birth among the Veerasaivas is marked by the absence of these minute details of ceremonial observance. The Lingadharana ceremony which confers caste membership is performed for both boys and girls almost immediately after their birth. Among the Twice-born the boys are admitted into the Brahmin fold effectively only after they have undergone initiation which may be performed any time after the eighth year and before marriage.

The 'sacred thread' ceremony for the Twice-born is said to symbolize the spiritual rebirth of an individual. Hence the Twice-born or *Dwija*, have two births, the biological and the spiritual, separated by an interval of time. Strictly speaking, biological birth does not admit a person into the Brahmanical fold. It is the initiation ceremony that makes a man a Brahmin. But in practice birth is taken as a criterion of caste membership, especially as the initiation ceremony is seldom conducted at the prescribed time. Nowadays it is performed either when a boy is 16 or 17 or is joined to the wedding ritual.

B. There is no initiation ceremony for Brahmin girls. The religious inequality of the sexes is one of the important features which mark off the Twice-born from the others.

When a girl attains puberty, a Jangam is invited to the house on the fifth day, among the Lingayats. On the other four days the girl's movements are confined to the house but she does not undergo the rigours of complete seclusion, for she is given a daily bath in the

bathroom inside the house. On the fifth day, the Jangam gives consecrated water and ceremonial coconut water to the girl and to other members of her family. With this the girl regains her normal status.

Among the Twice-born, a girl attaining puberty is given a ceremonial bath on the first day in a special place outside the house. She is secluded for four days, and she is given a ceremonial bath on the fourth day which formally removes puberty pollution.<sup>1</sup> The house is whitewashed. The girl is given cow's urine to sip, and some of it is sprinkled all over the house. This observance does not restore the girl to her normal status for some more days to come ; so her movements in the house are still restricted. Men again change their sacred thread.

C. Among the Lingayats menstruating women are not secluded. They bathe and go about their normal household tasks. They probably avoid handling other people's children. There is a belief that if a married woman in her periods should touch a child, and conceive immediately, the child will be in danger of contracting a particular disease. A menstruating woman is not considered polluting, and hence suffers no disabilities.

In contrast to the above, menstruating women among Brahmins are segregated for three days. They change their clothes but do not take a bath. They are considered polluting. Early on the fourth day they take a ceremonial bath in a special place outside the house. The plate, cup and bedding used by them are all purified before they enter the house. But they do not cook or do household work until the fifth day.

D. There is no separate initiation ceremony for boys among the Lingayats. The Lingadharana ceremony at birth initiates both boys and girls into the Veerasaiva faith. In addition to this, Jangam boys must undergo Iyyachara to be able to play some ritual roles. I have already pointed out that among the Twice-born it is only a boy who undergoes initiation. A girl does not.

Among Lingayats the personal Lingam, given at birth, is worn on the body irrespective of status (married, unmarried widowed, mothers in child-bed, girls' attaining puberty), sex (men and women), and age (young and old). The individual who receives it at birth is buried

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1942, *Marriage & Family in Mysore*. See Chapter XI, for a detailed account of puberty rites especially among the Twice-born. Also see, Parvathamma, C, 1967, "Girls' Puberty Ceremonies Among the Kshatriyas and Lingayats of Mysore, *Arts Journal of Mysore Uni.*, 1967, Vol. 23 p. 42-55."

with it after his death. The personal linga is put in the left hand (the normal position of worship) of the corpse in the grave. Individuals worship their personal linga throughout their life. Even change of status does not affect this. In the same way, the sacred ash (*Vibhuti*) is worn on the forehead of a Lingayat irrespective of status, sex and age.

The above observances throw into relief two contrasts between the Lingayats and the Twice-born. Among Brahmins a woman is never entitled to wear the sacred thread and she cannot adorn her person with vermilion or tumeric powder or wear glass bangles—the symbols of married status—once she removes them after the death of her husband. Brahmin men change their sacred thread after every birth and death in the family, in addition to the ceremonial change effected every year during July-August. The worship of the family deity is suspended until the pollution period is over and it is resumed only after purification is effected.

Both men and women may practise the religious way of life equally among the Veerasaivas. So a sense of equality of sex prevails at least on the mystical plane. This is denied to women among the Twice-born. The various *vratas* which Brahmin married women and widows undertake does not amount to religious equality of sexes. Usually the domestic priest recites mantras and directs the rituals, while a Brahmin woman cannot undertake padapuja (worship of feet) of the guru independently. Veerasaivas regard this as of considerable importance, and emphasize the fundamentally individualistic nature of religious experience, in addition to occasional communal participation.

The “purity of Lingayat mankind”<sup>1</sup> i.e., that people are pure by virtue of being Lingayats, is asserted as a starting point. In fact, many of the Lingayat informants failed to understand the Brahmanical conception of ceremonial purity. An officiating Brahmin or some one in a ritual state alone is considered to be pure, while the rest are less pure or impure. Lingayats argued that it is ridiculous to think that only one or two persons in a family can keep pure to perform ritual roles while others remain impure. This distinction is not found among the Veerasaivas. Its absence is consistent with the values attached to equality and fraternity in Veerasaiva philosophy and practice.

1. Nandimath, S. C., 1942, *A Hand-book of Veerasaivism*, p. 38.



E. During a wedding a Jangam's services are essential for all Lingayats. A Jangam must be present on almost all ceremonial occasions connected with a wedding, starting with the choosing of a bride by the elders of a man's group, until the consummation ceremony. Apart from doing astrological calculations, such as the fixing of auspicious days and times for particular ceremonies, a Jangam accompanies the wedding party and directs the main ceremony in the wedding i.e., *dhare*, when the groom ties the tali, the marriage-pendant, to the bride's neck.

Lingayats use a sacred lamp called kalasa, and not fire, during a wedding. A sacrificial fire is an essential part of a Brahmanical wedding. For example, the husband and wife take an oath of mutual fidelity, invoking *Agni*, the God of fire, and then take the ceremonial 'seven steps' (*saptapadi*) besides the fire. The use of fire is associated with sacrifice. Veerasaiva philosophy condemns this, and hence it is not practised.

F. The services of a Jangam are essential when there is a death in a Lingayat household. The party may invite a Jangam well before the death of a person. The dying person will touch the feet of the Jangam. Actual worship of the feet (*padapuje*) may be done by another person on behalf of the dying man. But the important feature is that the dying man is given consecrated water (*padodaka*) to sip. Meanwhile the Jangam and his attendants participate in a ceremonial dinner. This is known as the '*Vibhuti Veelya*' ceremony.

In Kshetra, this ceremony was conducted around 1950 for a Lingayat woman. The woman died while the ceremony was in progress. When this happens the person is considered to be very lucky. Another Lingayat woman underwent this ceremony in early 1959, but she survived. Survival after this ceremony imposes certain restrictions on a person's freedom to eat and drink. He or she has to take a bath and sip consecrated (*padodaka*) water before eating.

Among the Veerasaivas a dead person is supposed to have become united with God Shiva. Hence the vernacular terms '*Lingaikya*' (united with linga), '*Shivaikya*' (united with Shiva) are used in place of the term 'death'. This conception theoretically overrules the whole Brahmanical ideology connected with heaven, hell, *karma* and the transmigration of souls. The Buddhist conception of *Nirvana* consists in attaining freedom from the cycle of rebirths. It is a logical development of the Brahmanical ideology of the transmigration of souls. Veerasaivism goes a step further and denies all notions of transmigration by

affirming that the dead are united with the Supreme Being. The idea has a close resemblance to the Islamic conception. According to Sastri, "Two features of the sect,—the prominent place held by the monasteries, and more or less complete social and religious equality among the sectarians—have been held to be due to the influence of Jainism and Islam."<sup>1</sup>

A Jangam performs the '*Pushpanjali*' ceremony over the corpse. The dead body is smeared with sacred ash (*Vibhuti*), and sandalwood paste, while scented sticks are burnt along with a sacred lamp (*kalasa*). The officiating Jangam distributes *patre*, the leaves of the *bilwa* (*Cassia fistula*) tree, to the gathered people. He holds some in his hand and recites sacred verses (*mantras*). When the last verse is uttered, '*Parvathe Pathe Hara Namah*' ('salute God Shiva, husband of Parvati') both the Jangam and the crowd throw *bilwa* leaves on the corpse. This is repeated five times to the accompaniment of pipe music played by *Cheluvadis*. After this the corpse is carried to the burial ground.

A Jangam must follow the corpse to the burial ground, and as the corpse is lowered into the grave, get down into it and ceremonially place his right foot on the head of the corpse chanting sacred verses while the gathered crowd throw *bilwa* and wave incense.

Once the grave is filled with earth, the spade used for digging it is placed upside down on the grave. The Jangam now places his feet on the spade, while a relative of the dead worships his feet. This ends the series of rites performed near the grave. A Jangam acting for non-Lingayat family will shorten and simplify this complex of funeral rites, carrying them out only in the house and not at the burial place.

After the burial, the party will bathe in the river and return home. The Jangam accompanies them to the house of the dead man. All the relatives of the dead man now take consecrated water and ceremonial coconut water (*padodaka* and *karunaprasada*) from the Jangam and feed him with some sweet dish. With this, purification from death pollution—if it could properly be called pollution—is effected.

The ceremony of 'calling back the dead' (*Olage tegedukolluvudu*) may take place any time after the fifth day even up to three years later. This marks the end of the funerary rites. A Jangam, if invited on this occasion, will give the usual consecrated water and ceremonial coconut water to the members of the household. The

1. Sastri, K.A.N., 1955, Op. Cit., p. 417.

Lingayats do not visit the grave nor do they observe annual ancestral worship like the Twice-born. But ancestor spirits are propitiated occasionally, especially before a wedding is celebrated in a family, when the blessings of the ancestors are sought by the living members.

A Brahmin corpse, on the other hand, does not undergo such an elaborate ceremony. All the Twice-born castes burn their dead. Death pollution covers a period of twelve days marked by various ceremonies done to the dead person.<sup>1</sup> On the eleventh day all second-grade mourners are purified, while the first-grade mourners, (for example, a son), who had carried fire and lit the funeral pyre are purified on the twelfth day, when a feast is given. Till then no family deity may be worshipped, and men must change their sacred threads. The mourners may not enter the kitchen or inner parts of the house till purification is effected.

Annual ancestral worship and offering of ceremonial rice balls—*pinda*—to the dead, are a prominent feature of ceremonies among the Twice-born. The notion of death pollution and elaborate mortuary rites differentiate the Twice-born from the Veerasaivas. Since a dead person among the Veerasaivas is described as being 'united with Shiva', mourners, death pollution, purification, elaborate mortuary rites and funeral feasts may sound superfluous.

A widow among the Twice-born removes all symbols of married status such as her tali, glass bangles and nose ornament on the tenth day after her husband's death. Should she die within this period, she is supposed to die in a married state and no extra death pollution is involved. About two generations back this happened in one of the Kshatriya families in Kshetra. A Brahmin widow shaves her head and all the Twice-born forbid widow remarriage. Among the Veerasaivas a woman who becomes a widow removes all signs of her married status before the corpse is buried. In contrast to the Brahmanical prohibition, the Lingayats allow widow remarriage, after which the widow may resume the wearing of glass bangles, tali and nose ornament.

#### 4. Structural Implications of a Jangam's Role

A Jangam is fed, given betel-nut and a small sum—ceremonial fee (Dakshine) on all ceremonial occasions when he officiates among Lingayats. In addition, he gets paid in kind annually during the

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1952. See for details of Coorg death ceremonies *Religion & Society Amongst the Coorgs of South India*.



harvest. A Lingayat agricultural household carries consecrated water from a Jangam and sprinkles it on the heap of *jowar*, or whatever staple crop is gathered at harvest time.

After sprinkling consecrated water the household members set apart a share of *jowar* for the Jangam. If the Jangam is on the spot, the householder will beg him to allow him to fall at his feet and be given his blessing. A Jangam may threaten to withhold this favour and bargain for a larger present. One of my informants narrated how a Jangam bargained for a larger gift of grain during the 1959 harvest in a neighbouring village. This is the only payment in kind made by the Lingayat disciples in the year.

Besides life-crises ceremonies, when a Jangam's services are sought by the Lingayats, the Jangam also gives consecrated water (*padodaka*) which is sprinkled all over to purify a house contaminated by the entering of a crow or the hooting of an owl. A Jangam's services may also be needed on festive occasions when he is usually fed by the Lingayat householders. All these ritual services together make the position of the Jangam very important in relation to their Lingayat disciples. The ritual tie between a Jangam and his disciples in most cases becomes life-long. But a dissatisfied disciple can find a substitute or forego his Jangam's services. A Jangam has no way of enforcing his ritual role. A break like this came about with a Jangam's family and one of my Lingayat informants after the elections to the Village Panchayat Board in April, 1960.

A Jangam's family had broken their promise to divide the family votes between two disciples who contested the elections from strongly opposed parties. The person who severed his relations was served on ritual occasions by a senior Jangam who was an uncle of the other family. The senior Jangam had favoured the opposition party in the elections (the Lingayat party which opposed the Kshatriya President's party). The senior Jangam probably gave up some other family in favour of his nephews where they could officiate on ceremonial occasions. In Kshetra, the Lingayat households are informally divided among Jangams to facilitate ritual services. In the above circumstances it is possible for one Jangam to officiate on behalf of another, as ritual service is not a right which they can enforce. But in some respects, it is a duty which a Jangam renders when called upon by disciples.

By the same token, the authority of a 'personal and family Spiritual Teacher' among the Lingayats seems to be very weak. He

seldom exercises his power to excommunicate an offender against caste rules. For instance, a widow who becomes pregnant, or a woman who commits adultery with a low caste man who is from a non-Lingayat caste is excommunicated. The local caste council, inter-village caste council, and finally the caste Spiritual Teacher (*kulaguru*) may inflict this punishment and the person would be re-admitted into the caste fold only upon paying a heavy fine and undergoing purificatory rites. Among the Lingayats of Kshetra such offences have gone completely unpunished.

There are many examples of infringement of caste behaviour among the Lingayats of Kshetra where the community has neither pronounced excommunication, nor a Jangam—a personal or family Spiritual Teacher withheld his services. Lingayat parties which beat one another with sandals in the early 1930's and fought a lawsuit on this score were not boycotted by the rest of the Lingayat community nor did the Jangams refuse to serve them. In fact, after the fight, individual households invited their personal Jangam and received consecrated water and ceremonial coconut water (*padodaka* and *karunaprasada*) from him.

A young Lingayat widow became pregnant in 1958. It was the police and not the caste-group that imposed legal sanctions. In fact, the widow gave the name of a low caste servant as her lover. But the Lingayat elders persuaded her to name her widower brother-in-law to save the face of the family. When I was in the field, the woman had normal social relations with members of her caste-group and Jangams served her family. Nobody discriminated against the woman or her family. Indeed, a later investigator would find great difficulty in establishing the true facts. The liberal attitudes among the Lingayats preclude serious notice of such lapses on the part of individuals being taken.

In September 1960, the police reappeared to enquire how the widow was bringing up her child. Then some members of the Lingayat community conspired to produce a death certificate for the child from a Government Hospital doctor. They bribed both the doctor and the police department before the matter subsided. After I left the field, the widow became pregnant again. Wearied of this, the family and of some of the Lingayat elders wanted her to marry an old man. However, the marriage did not take place and she gave birth to a boy in Kshetra in February 1961.

In contrast, I may mention that a similar case of a Kuruba widow who was impregnated during 1960 by a man of her own caste,

was viewed very seriously by the Kuruba community. Kuruba elders assured me that their caste council would pronounce excommunication on her when she gave birth. The sentence would be effective until she paid a fine, underwent purification and offered a dinner to the caste-group.

Among the Twice-born a similar case would not simply mean the excommunication of the guilty person but would involve a severe penalty. A guilty person is considered to be dead by the family and the community, and *Ghata Shraddha*<sup>1</sup> may be performed by the family. In the past, one or two female affines of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra did not conform to the traditional code of ethics. A widow ran away with a lover belonging to another caste. My Kshatriya informants insisted that she had died long ago, although she is still alive in a distant town.

The brief comparison made above should make clear the nature of the religious differences between the Veerasaivas and the Twice-born, and should as well explain the role of the Jangam. Not only are their religious concepts divergent, but also their practice. I have also outlined the relative affinity between non-Lingayat and Untouchable practices and the Veerasaiva practices. Yet there are additional features which distinguish the Veerasaivas from the lower castes too.

In the ineffectiveness of its Spiritual Teacher and its loose organization, the Veerasaiva community is in marked contrast to other castes. The above two features may have resulted from the diverse elements that have gone into it, with the rapid growth and spread of the sect since the time of Basava.

The history of the Lingayat sect will probably help us to understand why their community is rather loosely organized. Both these points will emerge below when I attempt an analysis of the internal structural differences of the Veerasaivas. Different castes and sub-castes, which form a hierarchy, are based on differential ritual status as well as different occupations, supported sometimes by differences in customs and practices. I shall deal below with the other sub-castes among the Lingayats. By depicting the relationship that exists between the Panchachara Lingayats and the Jangams, I have also pointed out the place and role of Jangams.

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1942, Op. Cit., p. 118.



### 5. Sadaru Separatism and the History of the Sect

The services of a Jangam described above are available to all Lingayat sub-castes. They all interdine but do not intermarry, although there are instances of intermarriage between members of some sub-castes. In recent years, where the Sadarus are in a majority, they have put themselves in opposition to Panchachara sub-caste. This finds expression in the attempt to serve ritual ties with the hereditary Jangam who serves all the Lingayats.

The Sadarus appoint one of their own Jangams instead, who serves them on all ritual occasions. It is very easy to do this. A member of a Sadaru Lingayat family will undergo the initiation (Diksha) ceremony at the hands of the head of the Mutt who has his headquarters at Shivagiri in Chitradurga district. This status, once acquired, becomes hereditary and his services are available to the Sadaru Lingayats.

The ritual 'self-containedness' gives them certain advantages, especially when the Sadarus and the Panchacharas are in conflict. The Sadaru movement which was launched about the time of the First World War has gone on steadily and the gulf between the two sub-castes has widened. That these two sub-castes tend to react almost as contending parties is daily experienced by anyone in Bellary, Chitradurga and the adjoining districts. The respective Mutts have given backing and encouragement to their Lingayat disciples in the fight for priority and privileges. The conflict between the Sadarus of the Sivagiri Mutt and the Panchacharas of the Durgapatna Mutt has caused little less than a riot between their disciples.

The conflict between the Sadarus and the other Lingayat sub-castes does not exist in Kshetra. A Sadaru widow is living in concubinage with a married Panchachara man. In Kshetra the Sadarus depend upon hereditary Jangams' services. In Kolalu, where there is a majority of Sadarus, the difference between the sub-castes does exist. The two sub-castes fought in 1939-40, when the Sadarus tried to take the head of their Mutt in a procession through the village. Since then religious processions and hymn groups (bhajans) have been banned in Kolalu. In 1932, the two sub-castes fought at Uttangi, in Bellary district. Then the government backed up the claims of the Sadarus and permitted them to take their Spiritual Teacher in a procession by affording them armed protection against any obstruction by the other sub-castes.

Sadarus assert their superiority over Panchacharas on the following grounds.

In contrast to Panchacharas, Sadarus have a clan system (*bedagu*) which regulates marriage by insisting upon clan exogamy. Like the clan, *bedagu* is named after animals, trees, flowers and fruits, but without totemic implications. The clan system puts Sadarus on a par with other Hindu castes, especially low castes, who also have flowers, fruits and animals for their clan names.

That a sectarian movement can give rise to castes and sub-castes within itself is evident from the number of Veerasaiva castes and sub-castes in Kshetra. "The sect developing into a caste needs only to be interested in securing its social rank over and against other castes. There is no obstacle to this ; indeed, there are Hindu castes which repudiate the Brahmin for their own priests. In the course of time the sect can be recognized either as a single caste (sect-caste) or as a caste with sub-castes of different social rank. This last occurs when the sect members are socially quite heterogeneous."<sup>1</sup>

Veerasaivism fits the above description perfectly. The rapid spread of Veerasaivism was due to the teachings of Basava and his followers during the 12th century. These were a set of people popularly known as *Vachanakaras*, whom I would describe as 'preachers' who had embraced Veerasaivism, and came from various castes. Basava himself was a Saiva Brahmin by birth. Mass conversions from other castes to Veerasaivism took place during this period. There is ample literary and also contemporary evidence to this effect. Veerasaivism is certainly heterogeneous in its composition.

Veerasaivism was at once a rebellious and a reformist movement. It rebelled against orthodox Hinduism with its rigid caste system and implicit inequality of men, and denounced Vedic Brahmanical practices such as blood sacrifice, and ideas of ritual pollution. Although the early preachers came from different social backgrounds, they, nevertheless, united in expounding a new philosophy. "It is possible for some of these preachers to be radical, others to be conservative and still others to follow a middle course."<sup>2</sup> For some of the preachers might have been rebels who initiated drastic changes in society, while others might have been just reformers of orthodox Hinduism.

People who came under the influence of these early preachers might have shared the radical or conservative views of the latter.

1. Weber, Max. 1958. *The Religion of India*. p. 19.
2. Murthy, M.R.S. 1942, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

Where the preachers followed a middle course, the followers might have done the same. Many of the people who embraced Veerasaivism came from many castes as did their preachers. The social background of the newly converted people might have led to differences. It is possible that those who followed radical teachings were able to establish new ways of living to the exclusion of old practices. The conservatives might have been slow to change, while the followers of the 'middle course' might have compromised between traditional and unprecedented modes of behaviour.

The existing differences between Panchacharas and Sadarus might be explained in this manner. Those who constitute the Panchachara sub-caste today, in the past, i.e., when they were converted to Veerasaivism, might have welcomed radical teachings and were probably able to inaugurate new way at the expense of old practices. It is possible that the Panchachara Lingayats adapted themselves to the Veerasaiva philosophy and gave up the clan system, (for there are no clans among Panchacharas present) a vestige of their caste status before conversion. Those belonging to the Sadaru sub-caste who did not come under the influence of either the radical or the conservative preachers but of those who followed a middle course, similarly might have been able to follow the new practices, without entirely giving up their old ones.

Sadarus may have reached a compromise between the old and the new caste status. They retained the clan system which they were used to before conversion ; but they also imbibed Veerasaiva tenets once they were initiated into the new order. If the difference between Panchacharas and Sadarus is rooted in customary practices, there are also other factors which explain the differences further. To some extent the different sub-castes follow different occupations and this is reflected in the structural differentiation among the Veerasaivas. This will become evident as I discuss the occupations followed by different sub-castes.

The early preachers emphasized work, manual work (*kayakave kailasa*), to earn one's living. It is possible that batches of converts continued to practise their old occupations after their conversion to Veerasaivism. This in due course led to the formation of different social grades, slowly crystallising into caste-groups. For example, the Banajigas form a caste exclusively occupied with trading.

Sadaru 'separatism' from the Panchacharas is further supported by the fact that Sadarus, in their capacity as village ritual leaders



—*Banakaras*, one of the twelve formal and ritual offices—have often represented and participated in non-Lingayat caste councils. The juridical tie between the Sadaru Lingayat and non-Lingayat castes suggests that there is an affinity between the two. I can cite evidence of this from Kshetra. Elderly informants in the village told me that X, a Sadaru Lingayat family provides Banakaras (ritual leaders) to the village, while Y and Z Banakara families among the Panchacharas, have been declared ritual leaders in opposition to the Sadaru family only recently and that the latter's services are confined only to Panchachara sub-caste. It was X and not Y and Z who took part in the Kuruba caste council held during September 1960.

Sadarus have a clan system. As village religious leaders, they are assigned ritual office (Banakara) and they also exercise juridical authority over non-Lingayats. All this goes to show that they, as converts to Veerasaivism, must have followed the middle course in retaining the old without inhibiting the new, insofar as they have common practices with other Lingayats. Sadarus are mockingly called 'Madaru' a corruption of the word untouchable Madiga.

Panchachara informants, on the other hand, told me that in the early years of the 20th century commensality between the two sub-castes was restricted. Where it was practised, the Panchacharas never served food to Sadarus in bell-metal plates. They added that this kind of discrimination which humiliated the Sadarus, finally led to an anti-Panchachara movement.

Panchacharas further claimed that they did have a clan system at one time, but it fell into disuse when marriages came to be arranged between families with different family Spiritual Teachers and family deities i.e. it was felt that families having a common Spiritual Teacher and family deity could not intermarry. This principle served the same role as the clan system among the Sadarus and other castes. This implies that the Panchacharas are more doctrinaire, whereas the Sadarus have compromised with existing facts and customs.

Some of my Panchachara informants when pressed to account for the absence of a clan system rationalized it on lines such as the breaking of caste endogamy through love marriages in modern times. They argued that when caste endogamy is often broken or disregarded, there is no necessity for enforcing clan exogamy. This confirms the thesis that the Panchachara sub-caste as converts to Veerasaivism from other castes followed and implemented radical changes in place of

old customs and practices. The Panchacharas are often described as Panchama Sale, especially the 'Sale' being emphasized, the word meaning a weaver.

Here I must say a word about the ranking of the sub-castes in Division Two. The Panchacharas are generally held to occupy the top rank. This was confirmed by the Jangams and all other sub-castes. Since the Sadarus are a contending party (although not in Kshetra) they should be put opposite the Panchacharas. But I have put them at the bottom, so that they still stand at an opposite pole to the Panchacharas. The order of arrangement is based on the possession or non-possession of a clan system. The clan system suggests affinity with non-Lingayat (perhaps low) castes, and its absence implies a departure from old customs and an adoption of more doctrinaire and perhaps radical customs. The first three divisions do not have a clan system, while the last two have it. In fact, the number of variables that affect the relative status of these sub-castes become clear only in the course of discussing them in detail.

#### 6. The Punctilious Banajigas

The Banajigas of Kshetra are mostly traders who own and run grocery shops. Banajigas concede that Panchacharas are ritually superior but discriminate against them in practice. At the turn of the century they did not interdine with the Panchacharas. In the early 1930's a scrupulous Banajiga chose to leave the village instead of submitting to Panchachara juridical authority and consenting to eat at their houses. Today not only are commensal rules broken, but sub-caste endogamy has also been relaxed. A Banajiga has a Panchachara wife, while a Banajiga woman left her husband and children, and is living with a Panchachara widower who has a son and a daughter by his first marriage.

The Banajigas claim that they are more punctilious, and cleaner as regards their caste practices than the Panchacharas, who are described as less strict and irregular in their caste observances. The Panchacharas are mostly engaged in agriculture and it keeps them busy and dirty. The Banajigas discriminate because the Panchacharas could not keep the required cleanliness for religious observances. Like Panchacharas, the Banajigas also lack a clan system, but they enforce the principle of exogamy based on a common Spiritual Teacher and family deity.

Among the Banajigas, there are further subdivisions such as Pavada Setti, Kori Setti, and so on. These subdivisions again form



a hierarchy. They all interdine and intermarry, but the Pavada Settis enjoy ritual superiority. The internal structural differentiation among the Banajigas described below offers further interesting points that could be speculated about in the background of the spread of Veerasaivism.

The occupational and other customary differences have ended up in the formation of sub-castes and subdivisions within sub-castes among the Lingayats. This is also evident from the Banajigas in Kshetra. Basava, the exponent of Veerasaiva tenets, was serving under Bijjala, a Jain king. Bijjala *Purana* says that Basava converted many Jains to Veerasaivism. It is possible that the present-day Banajigas were converts from Jainism. Thurston quoting Enthoven has mentioned the Lingayat Banajigas and Jain Banajigas.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, both sections are traders, one Veerasaivas and the other Jains by faith. Other things being equal, the Jains were a trading community during Basava's time as they are today. Conversion to Veerasaivism did not prevent them for continuing to practise their old occupation for Veerasaivism laid stress on following a vocation.

A particular ritual act performed by the Pavada Settis at once establishes their affinity with Jain practices, and at the same time distinguishes them from other subdivisions among the Banajigas. The Pavada Settis distinguish themselves on the basis of this custom. It is customary among the Pavada Settis to cover the water pot with a piece of cloth when they carry drinking water from a well or a river. This will keep out dust and insects. The underlying idea is more than a mere concept of purity. It is rather that living creatures must not be injured, an idea also held by the Jains. This practice is advanced by the Pavada Settis as a mark of superiority which enhances their social rank in comparison with the other Banajiga subdivisions.

A local Jangam derided the pretensions of the subdivisions and the sub-caste of the Banajigas in claiming superiority and discriminating against the Panchacharas. He described the Banajigas as being "fit to carry the dead ass (*Satta Katte Horuvavaru*)". He went on to say that in spite of their punctiliousness and cleanliness, which is the basis of their discrimination against the Panchacharas, the Banajigas 'are useless.' They cannot be grafted on to the Jangam order like the Panchacharas. Hence they are unfit for ritual posts. Their ritual status is very low compared with that of the Panchachara Lingayats.

The Banajigas of Kshetra admitted their low ritual status as

1. Thurston, E. 1909, Op. Cit., p. 261.



compared with that of the Panchacharas. Yet among the Banajigas of Kshetra, a certain Basappa, who lived towards the end of the 18th century or the early 19th century, is today recognized by the Veerasaivas as a very pious man. Several heads of Mutts from Bellary and neighbouring districts gathered in 1956 and laid the foundation of a Mutt for Basappa in Kshetra at the same site on which his dilapidated house is standing today. Basappa's writings on Veerasaivism have been collected by a Mutt and published in Dharwar. Basappa was renamed Basavalinga *Sharana*. *Sharana* ('saint') is an exalted spiritual rank which a pious man can attain among the Veerasaivas.

## 7. Other Caste-groups in the Hierarchy

*Handerahuta* is a sub-caste which is spread out over a very limited area. In Kshetra, it is represented by the family of a school-teacher who comes from Kolalu. I am told that this sub-caste is found in four other villages round about Kolalu and a few villages in Dharwar district. My informant claimed to belong to a special branch of the Panchacharas, although his relatives have intermarried with Banajigas. An elderly informant from Kolalu told me that *Handerahuta* means 'cowherd', and they were the founders of the Kshetra Linga temple. The customs and practices among *Handerahuta* are the same as among other Lingayat sub-castes.

The *Shiva Simpigas* of Kshetra belong to the *Shivadasamayya* subdivision. The myth of the origin of this caste is that God Shiva is believed to have disguised himself as a tailor (*simpiga*) and mended Parvati's torn saree. He showed her a miracle, over which she had had an argument with him. Tailoring is the caste profession of the *Shiva Simpigas*. Two out of the four families in Kshetra own sewing machines and do sewing in addition to agriculture.

The ritual cycle among the *Shiva Simpigas* is in accordance with that of the other Lingayat sub-castes with whom they interdine but do not intermarry. The *Shiva Simpigas* of Kshetra claimed that they had to interdine with other Lingayat sub-castes because they were so few in number. Indeed, they were forced to depend upon others' co-operation on all ceremonial occasions. Like the *Sadarus*, the *Shiva Simpigas* have a clan system. But this has not brought them to align themselves with the *Sadarus* or to struggle against the Panchacharas to assert superiority.

I have already discussed the status and role of the Lingayat potter and barber in the chapter on social stratification.

I shall therefore only give a very brief description of these castes below.

The Lingayat *kumbara* is a potter by caste as well as by occupation but he practises the Veerasaiva faith. The potters interdine with other Lingayats and accept only a Jangam's ritual services. The potters claim that they are similar to the Panchacharas for all purposes and that their ceremonial life is identical with that of other Lingayats. The potters participate in all events common to the larger circle of Veerasaivas.

The Lingayat barbers are called 'barbers' after their profession. Otherwise they have much in common with the Veerasaivas. Only a Jangam officiates for them, and they accept food only at the hands of the Veerasaivas. I have already pointed out how all the castes, and even the Veerasaivas, discriminate against barbers by not accepting food from them. The discrimination against barbers, however, has not affected their rank in the caste hierarchy of the village, which fact I have also pointed out in chapter on social stratification. The barbers are considered to be one of the Veerasaiva castes and so rank quite high in the hierarchy as compared with non-Lingayats and Untouchables. Although no one accepts food from barbers, yet other factors, especially the fact that the barbers confine their social and ritual interrelationships mainly with the Lingayats, contribute to the strengthening of their higher rank in the village caste-group.

## 8. Veerasaiva Liberalism

In the foregoing sections I have accounted for the internal structural differentiation among the Veerasaivas. Although they constitute one religious group opposed to Brahmanical religion, it is discernible that Veerasaivas were and still are not able to shake off the hold of traditions. Due to historical accidents, the 'rebellious—reformist' movement as time went by, became a 'conformist' movement. Veerasaivism recruited followers from among indigeneous castes. Such conversions to the new faith could not usher in really radical principles which were a departure from traditions. Since Veerasaivism is functioning amidst other castes, the impact of the general structure is far more impressive and visible.

A radical-reformist movement which is anti-Brahmanical and opposed to 'Sanskritization' processes in many ways could not achieve its major aims. It failed to establish a casteless society and secure

social justice and equality as the exponents of Veerasaiva tenets had preached earlier. This can be explained with reference to different sub-castes among Veerasaivas. Occupational and customary differences as shown above mark off one sub-caste from the other. Sub-caste differences also indicate differential ritual status. Also rivalry, jealousy and individual idiosyncracies contribute to increase sub-caste consciousness. The lack of a strong and centrally organized religious authority leaves the Veerasaiva groups further divided. Conflicting secular interests and the absence of a unifying spiritual head gives the Veerasaivas a degree of freedom which is perhaps not found among other sectarian movements within Hinduism.

The disunity widespread among the Veerasaiva sub-castes at the village level and also in relation to the wider area has had a positive value in the long-drawn out struggle for power between the Kshatriyas and Veerasaivas in Kshetra. In Kshetra the majority of the Veerasaivas of all sub-castes have usually been on the Kshatriya side, while a few Lingayats fought to oust the Kshatriyas. Caste and communal sentiments were not of overriding importance to the Lingayats. Personal interest and other expediencies have always had priority as will become clear below. The absence of a single centralized religious authority has left the several Veerasaiva sub-castes to function almost independent of one another. Even a single sub-caste like the Panchacharas in Kshetra owes allegiance to some fifteen Spiritual Teachers—Gurus—who are scattered in Bellary, Chitradurga and Dharwar districts.

The Veerasaiva caste-groups are occupationally diversified. In fact in no other caste-group does one come across such a diversity as among the Veerasaivas. A potter or a barber in Kshetra is as much the follower of Veerasaivism as a trader or a tailor. Basava and his followers emphasized that every one should follow a vocation to earn his living. A vocation or work was considered very necessary to realise one's salvation. Work is heaven; *kayakave kailasa*, irrespective of notions of 'low and high' status thus provided the real liberal ethics for work.

If occupational diversity and sub-caste differences account for internal disunity, by the same token they are the visible marks of economic liberalism which are provided in Veerasaiva philosophy and practice. In Brahmanical Hinduism, occupational hierarchy indicates high or low status associated with particular occupations. Further, manual labour was taboo to the upper castes. Thus there was occupational rigidity. In contrast to this in Veerasaivism occu-



pational diversity seems to have been encouraged from the beginning. For Basava decried the rigid occupational structure and caste hierarchy found in Brahmanical Hinduism. His emphasis was not on the nature of work but on one's devotion to any kind of work followed as a vocation in life.

Veerasaivism as a reformist movement succeeded in avoiding sex differences with reference to religious practices. The sense of equality of sexes at the mystical plane again speaks of the liberalism in Veerasaivism. This spirit is absent in Brahmanical Hinduism. Brahmanical Hinduism on the contrary makes a rigid categorization of sexes. Women are like '*shudras*', forbidden to undergo initiation and to study sacred literature and practise religious life.

Similarly age and status differences are not marked in Veerasaivism. With the investiture of the personal lingam to the newly born babe it becomes and remains a Lingayat throughout its life. Life is a continuous process though punctuated by life-crises ceremonies like puberty and wedding. These, however, do not alter the basic social status of an individual Veerasaiva, while the 'sacred-thread' ceremony alone makes a man a Dwija or twice-born.

Liberal ethics is built into Veerasaiva teachings in that it has succeeded in nearly discarding the notion and practice of 'ritual purity and pollution', which is central to the Brahmanical castes. Veerasaivism secularized the occupations, although sub-caste differences to some extent are rooted in this very fact. In spite of customary differences among the several Veerasaiva sub-castes, at least a few of them have been able to abandon the old customs and traditions. These radical branches for instance are represented in Kshetra by the Panchachara sub-caste. The numerical preponderance of the Panchacharas in Kshetra has been both a boon and a bane to the community.

The Panchacharas follow many occupations including that of serving in the Kshetra linga temple. Temple service provided the Panchachara temple servants with an intimate knowledge of the working of the temple. This knowledge induced them on occasions to rebel against the Kshatriya control of the temple. They questioned Kshatriya overlordship and pointed out that the Kshatriyas had misappropriated it from the Jangams of Shivapur under whom it was alleged the Kshatriyas were serving.

The history of the temple, its founding, Kshatriya ownership, the several rituals, and its multi-caste followers can once again be

understood only with reference to the region and is not confined to the village alone. The Lingayat-Kshatriya disputes over temple ownership; and the temple politics, from the beginning involved people from the neighbouring places. While the local Lingayats largely derived support from fellow Lingayats in the neighbourhood, the Kshatriyas on the other hand received help from many people belonging to different castes including some Lingayats from a still wider area. As the Kshatriya right to temple ownership was guaranteed by the Government decision, in recent years temple politics has increasingly merged with village secular politics. Several forces outside the village also have helped to bring about this.

In part two I shall be analysing the role of the Kshetra Linga temple. The temple is a regional cult centre with the emphasis on agricultural rites. So sectarian attempts to deprive the Kshatriyas of ownership of the temple failed. The nature of the temple ceremonies, and the multi-caste followers coming from different linguistic and cultural areas mitigated local tension. In addition, the role of the Government and its officers helped to stabilise the Kshatriya position often by curtailing their rights. The temple as a religious centre has wider significance. The temple's political role in terms of inter-caste relationships is not limited to the village boundary. Throughout the Lingayat-Kshatriya disputes, it has essentially remained regional rather than local in character.

In recent years with the introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions, the role of the temple has also changed. Religious susceptibilities are easily exploited. Democratic political ideas and the state leadership provided by the Lingayats are reflected in local elections to the V.P.B. For the Veerasaivas of Kshetra feel that by virtue of their numerical strength and other assets, they should dominate the Panchayat. They especially want to get the Presidentship for a member of their own caste. But owing to a combination of several factors this has not been possible till now. Caste consciousness among the Lingayats, although not a recent innovation, is being rejuvenated afresh from outside as has always been the case. The temple cult also continues to sustain itself because it is fairly widespread in the states of Mysore, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Thus the politico-religious history of the village reflects a combination of regional and local forces. I turn now to analyse the temple and its religious and political settings.

## PART II

### CHAPTER V

### THE TEMPLE : ITS HISTORY AND CULT

#### 1. The Founding of the Temple

BEFORE discussing the temple cult, I deal with the conflicting versions of the founding of the temple in Kshetra to explain why the Veerasaivas failed in their attempt to take possession of the temple. A few points that go to strengthen the view that Kshatriyas were probably proprietors of the temple from the beginning are outlined below.

The founding of the Kshetra temple does not correspond exactly in time with the founding of the village proper. Yet it lends support to the expansion of the village in an effective manner. To this extent, it could be termed the 'refounding of Kshetra.' One Kapila Muni, an ancestor of the present Kshatriya proprietors of the Kshetra Linga temple, is said to have founded the temple. He actually unearthed a stone 'lingam' covered by an ant-hill. This is known as the 'self-generated lingam (*Swayambhu linga*).' An earthen image of the deity called 'Mannappa' was prepared out of mud from the ant-hill and installed at the back of the lingam. The lingam on the ground and the mud image together constitute the deity of the temple. A couple of metal images of the deity also grace the place now.

The story wound around the deity is mythical. But I shall try to decipher it, and attempt to reconstruct the history of the temple from traditional sources. I have already mentioned that the Kshatri-



yas of Kshetra have affinal links with the royal family of Anegondi in Raichur district, and with the Arasus of Belagatti in Shimoga district. These links are said to have existed for a long time, and Kshatriya genealogies substantiate it for five or six generations.

The Anegondi royal family was first plunged into confusion after a defeat it sustained under Mohammed-bin-Toghaluk, the Muslim invader from the North, in 1327. Members of the Anegondi royal family were scattered and some were taken to Delhi as captives and forced to embrace Islam.

The Muslim governor in charge of Anegondi found it impossible to rule, as the Hindus rose in revolt against him. The Delhi Sultan sent back Harihara and Bukka, two brothers to restore peace and order in the country. The brothers succeeded in this, but soon laid the foundation for an independent Hindu kingdom. The kingdom of Vijayanagar, founded in 1336, continued in the founders' line till 1846. "The interval (1447-86) is marked by much agitation, discontent, and opposition to the members of the old royal family, several of whom met with violent deaths."<sup>1</sup>

The internal squabbles among the Vijayanagar princes at last gave rise to a second dynasty. Saluva Narasimha, the founder of the second dynasty, usurped the kingdom and by his martial ability and statesmanship was able to restore the strength of the empire. Sewell says, "The problems of Narasimha's relationship to the old royal family has never yet been satisfactorily solved."<sup>2</sup> Hence it is suggested by one M.S. Gowda, author of *Marthanda Bhairava*, a small book in Kannada, published in 1932, that "the scattered members of the old royal family of Anegondi, by God's grace were able to succeed to the Vijayanagar throne in 1490 and ruled there till 1565, when the empire went to the Muslims after the defeat it sustained in the battle of Talikota in 1565."<sup>3</sup>

Some branches of the Vijayanagar royal family made good their escape after the collapse of the empire. One branch is still extant at Belagatti. The existing eldest male members claim to be the 16th generation in this line. Another branch, according to Sewell, first escaped to Penakonda in Ananthapur district and then to Chandragiri. A descendant of this dynasty granted a site to Sir Francis Day in 1639, on which Fort Saint George was built. The affinal links of the Kshetra Kshatriyas are in fact confined to these two places.

1. Sastri, K.A.N. 1955, *Op. Cit.*, p. 260.

2. Sewell, R. 1924, *Op. Cit.*, p. 108.

3. Gowda, M.S. 1932, *Marthanda Bhairava*. p. 17 (Footnote).

Kshatriya genealogies disclose the practice of marriage between close kin, uncle-niece marriages always having a preference. In this way it is possible to speculate that the Kshatriyas may be related to the Vijayanagar royal family.

The text of *Marthanda Bhairava* conjectures that one Kapilaiah, a relative ('*Bandhu*'—blood relative or affine ?) of the Anegondi royal family foresaw danger to the Hindus at the hands of the Muslims. So he moved to Meenagondi near Neraniki in Alur taluk, which is now in Andhra Pradesh.

It is said that the above event took place nearly two centuries before the actual invasion of Mohammed-bin-Toghaluk. So Kapilaiah had left Anegondi around the 11th century after warning the Anegondi royal family about the evil awaiting them in the future at the hands of the Muslims. It is difficult to say whether Kapilaiah moved out to safeguard himself or his interests, or whether his foresight was based on supernatural forces. I am inclined to think this as an exaggeration of probable historical fact, whereby it acquires mythical character.

The text further says that Kapilaiah was capable of building a Hindu kingdom, but thought it worldly vanity to do so as he had a bent for religious life. Just then he met one Gomuni, a sanyasi living in the Meenagondi hills. Gomuni preached to Kapilaiah the text of '*Marthanda Bhairava*' as given in the '*Brahmanda Purana*' and instructed him to go to Kshetra, the name of the place where the demon Malla was killed by Shiva in his *Marthanda Bhairava* form, to unearth the deity, and devote himself to the religious way of life. Kapilaiah readily agreed, and moved to Kshetra.

The existing Chalukyan temple of Kalleswara at Kshetra was in all probability built here during the 11th or 12th century by the western Chalukyan dynasty. One of my Kshatriya informants claimed that his ancestors were already at Kshetra before the Chalukyan temple was built and perhaps preceded it by 'thousands of years'. The reasons for claiming antiquity are obvious.

It is less likely that Kapilaiah left Anegondi as early as the 11th century. It is probable that he left Anegondi for Meenagondi after 1327 and his descendants continued there till 1565. Since there were no threats to Hindus by Muslims until 1310, it is unjustifiable to assume the 11th century as the starting point of the migration. This tends to submerge historical facts. Even 1327 is not a crucial date, for the rise of Vijayanagar in 1336 effectively checked

the advance of the Muslims. The glory of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar came to an end in 1565. The Muslims steadily rose to power in the South, and began to supplant the Muslim conquerors of North India from 1327. It is safer to assume that Hindus saw a great threat to their existence after the collapse of the Vijayanagar empire, but not before that.

Therefore, I suggest that the said Kapilaiah might have escaped to Meenagondi after 1565, and continued there for a while. From 1565 to 1800 this part of the Deccan was subject to the rule of the Bijapur Sultans, saw the rise of the Marattas, witnessed the conquests of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore giving rise to a new power in the Nizam of Hyderabad, who finally sought British protection in 1800. So Kapilaiah who had retired to Meenagondi in 1565 and probably was ruling over a small principality must have felt quite insecure.

The fact that the Kshatriyas of Kshetra describe themselves as 'original rulers of Meenagondi (*Adi Meenagondi Puravaradhisha*)', suggests that they did rule over Meenagondi for a while. Kapilaiah's disinclination for worldly vanities combined with the opportunity of meeting Gomuni, must have brought about the movement of Kapilaiah to Kshetra. The security implicit in this movement brought about a change in the traditional occupations followed by the Kshatriyas. A 'Spiritual Throne' was established at Kshetra, and the Kshatriyas as founders of the temple became the leaders of the cult. Today, the Kshetra Kshatriyas also describe themselves as 'Lords of the Kshetra throne (*Kshetra Simhasanadhipathi*)'. The surname 'Dharmakarta', used by the Kshatriyas, is upheld to convey the idea of 'Creator of Justice', i.e. ruler. When they could not rule over an earthly kingdom, they sought to establish a 'spiritual kingdom' as will be clear from the cult of the Kshetra Linga deity.

The Kshatriyas of Kshetra are of Kapila *Gotra* (clan), i.e., are descendants of Kapila, the founder of the temple. They describe themselves as belonging to the tradition expounded by Gomuni, who stands in the relation of Spiritual Teacher, i.e., *Guru Gomuni Sampradaya*. The caste of Gomuni remains obscure. This is probably fitting as he was a sanyasi. A sanyasi according to Hinduism is a man who has renounced worldly life. With this he renounces his caste status too. Hence a sanyasi tends to enjoy a respectable status.



As observed earlier, the founding of the temple does not correspond with the founding of the village. The village must have existed when the Chalukyan temple was built here during the 11th or 12th century. With the founding of the temple and spread of the cult, the place seems to have become important enough for the 18th century rulers around the area to take cognizance of the temple. They bestowed 'favourable orders (*Sannads*)' on the Kshatriya family, to continue the worship of the deity along traditional lines as usual, and some of them gave gifts of land and revenue to facilitate this.

An order granted between 1740-46, to the above effect by one Bahaddur Chikkana Gowda Desai of Guttalli in Dharwar district suggests that this area had come under the sway of the Marattas and that Desai was probably a minor chief ruling over Guttalli under the Marattas. In 1748, one Bharamanna Naik of Medakere in Chitradurga district issued another such order.

In 1788, one Sadar Sahib of Ranebennur, probably a governor or vassal of Tippu Sultan of Mysore, made a land and revenue gift to the priestesses Phaniyamma and Jakkamma of the Kshetra Linga temple. It is not known why the gift was given in the names of the women. But what is more important in the present context is the contents of the gift order. According to the gift deed, the Kshatriya family was empowered to collect revenue from Kshetra, Mallapura and Ramapura. They had to give some two hundred *varahas*<sup>1</sup> to Sadar Sahib and were allowed to keep the rest for themselves. The revenue released from Somalapura was to be used for the temple granary, while Mallapura was a straight gift to the Kshatriya family. I have already suggested that the making over of these small unprotected villages combined strategy with generosity.

The generous order for the use of land and revenue from these four villages must have been a welcome thing to the Kshatriyas as well as to the inhabitants of the villages themselves. Kshetra was already protected by a fort and hence could protect new comers from these four villages. Since the Kshatriyas were empowered to collect revenue from these villages, the villagers could not evade it either by not moving into Kshetra, or by moving to some other place as long as they had any landed property in this area. Further, payment of taxes entitled them to seek protection in times of need. For these and other reasons of security, as greater number of people

1. The variety of coins that were in circulation when the British took charge of the area makes it difficult to fix the value of a *varaha*.

meant greater strength against external raiders in times of danger, I suggest the four villages eventually merged with Kshetra which accounts for its expansion.

As I have suggested earlier, the people who moved here were other than the Kshatriyas, and the fact that they paid taxes to the Kshatriyas for some time might have sown the seeds of discontent. Today landholding is concentrated in the hands of the Veerasaivas. I think that this has always been so. It seems to me, that it was the Lingayats who moved into Kshetra, and paid large sums of revenue to the Kshatriyas. Tax-collectors are everywhere disliked by tax-payers. It naturally follows that the Kshatriyas were disliked by the Lingayats. This brought about a pervasive and deeper rift between the two castes. The initial economic relationship developed antagonism and rivalry based upon religious differences.

This rivalry was given an impetus by the major political changes and subsequent reforms that came about in this area. For with the advent of British rule, land reforms were made. Under the *ryotwari* system the farmer paid his rent directly to the Government. Hence the Kshatriyas lost their control. It is not surprising that N. Gowda, a local Lingayat complained to the Government against Kshatriya mismanagement of temple funds as early as 1885. The conflict between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats was given a start and from then onwards they became contending parties struggling for power.

It is possible to say with certainty that the Kshetra Kshatriya family had been here for some two hundred years before the gift was made and was managing the temple on its own since moving here after the break-up of the Vijayanagar empire in 1565. One of my Kshatriya informants told me that "the gifts of 1788 reduced their family to subordination." Till then it is believed that the Kshatriya family had enjoyed absolute rights amounting to political control over Kshetra and the surrounding four villages. However, though the history of Kshetra becomes clear from 1788 onwards, it is very hazy before that.

Since the temple is an object of competition between the Kshatriyas of Kshetra and the Jangams of Shivapur, the Jangams in another Kannada book published in 1949, put forward a different story of the founding of the temple and the gift of the temple to the Jangam family. This neither gives a clue to the founding of Kshetra nor its expansion.

According to the story one Devappa Naik and his nephews Ramappa Naik and Veerabasavanatharaya of the Hande Rahuta sub-caste of Lingayats, brother and nephews of Basappa Naik, the Raja of Ananthapur were camping near Kolalu around 1360. Three miles south, lay the Kshetra area most of which was covered with forest then. The cowherds of the family used to take the herd for grazing to the forest. After a while, the cowherds discovered that a barren cow, by name Laxmidevi, used to stray from the herd daily when the herd was driven to the river to drink water. On close observation they found that the cow used to drink water in a nearby pond, and go and stand on an ant-hill when milk used to flow from her udder as if someone was milking her. When the cowherds reported this, the royal family, surprised at the barren cow giving milk, suspected hidden wealth in the ant-hill. The belief is that ant-hills grow to cover hidden wealth and are safeguarded by a cobra.

The following day the royal family came to the spot with the necessary equipment and examined the ant-hill and the pond. They worshipped the ant-hill and then broke it open. Just then Devappa Naik was possessed by the spirit and uttered the words, "*Mai Olage Aru Linga, Aru Linga. Puravarada Linga* (six lingams in the body and lingams of six Pura)". Hence the derivation of the name Kshetra Linga (the literal translation of this text is not very convincing). However, it is said, that the royal family installed an earthen image made out of the ant-hill. They built a stone temple and installed a golden image of the deity. (But there is not a trace of the golden image of the deity now). To commemorate the cow they also built another temple near the pond and named it after it. The whole thing was made over as a gift to the Shivapur Jangam's family.

There is a Laxmidevi temple to the south of the village, and elderly informants could recall that local Kshatriyas would halt there on returning from a tour, when the whole village would give them a hearty welcome. This used to be so during the 19th and early 20th centuries, although the practice is no longer observed these days. There is a large unused well full of dirty water close to the temple, as well as a pond some two hundred yards to the east of the temple. As contending parties the Kshatriyas and the Jangams have naturally built up contradictory legends around the founding of the temple.



The Kshatriyas claim that they were the founders and hence are the proprietors of the temple. The Jangams claim that they were the real overlords under whom the Kshatriyas took to temple service. Both parties have made many allegations against one another to invalidate their claims. But the Kshatriyas have succeeded in establishing their right to the temple. The innumerable lawsuits about this temple lasting for nearly a century, and involving a number of villages from the neighbourhood in this dispute, have at last succeeded in establishing the Kshatriyas as the rightful temple proprietors. A Kshatriya is a trustee of the temple and the law of primogeniture has been established. Nearly 177 acres of gift land are enjoyed by the Kshatriya family for bearing the sword to the deity. A member of the Kshatriya family carries a sword and accompanies the deity whenever the latter is taken in a procession.

The failure of the Jangams to establish their rights to the temple are explained by a court ruling in the early 1920's upheld by the Hindu Religious Endowment Board of the Madras Government. Local Lingayat informants say that the Jangams failed on account of the 'limitation bar.' A time limit of sixty years is officially allowed to claim one's right through the court. The Jangam family which underwent many ups and downs could not attend to this in time. This gave an opportunity for the steady rise of the power of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra.

I am not trying to solve the problem, since the problem has already been solved by a legal decision in favour of the Kshatriyas. But the following few points go a long way in support of the Kshatriyas. It could be said that legal decisions reshaped the past for the Kshatriyas.

A third and popular viewpoint about the founding of the temple and the refounding of the village is an amalgam of bits of both of the above versions, in that people describe the cow as belonging to the Kshatriya family. As milch cow, it failed to give milk at home for a number of days, upon which the cowherds were instructed to find out the cause and so the story goes. Also the elderly informants were the first people to tell me that Kshetra includes within itself four other hamlets. How and when this came about was clear after the record was made available to me by the Kshatriyas. But the Jangams of Shivapur do not have any proof to this effect.

The followers of the cult drawn from the wider area and different castes are not aware who is actually controlling the temple.

The general notion is that it is some high caste Hindu. Obviously they identify the Kshetra Kshatriyas with the temple, pay reverence and fees to them when they make a pilgrimage to Kshetra, or set apart the vowed sum in their homes to send it to Kshetra later by post or through other devotees. At no time in the history of the temple do the Jangams seem to have enjoyed this privilege. If they were truly the holders of the temple, they would not have overlooked all the material benefits that accrue by assuming spiritual overlordship.

The Kshatriyas annually tour in many parts of South India, wherever there is any concentration of the followers of the cult of Kshetra Linga. The followers of the cult normally erect a small shrine with a trident in stone called '*Sibara*' and worship it as a counterpart of the Kshetra Linga deity itself. The management of these local shrines involves a hierarchy of offices. The Kshatriyas in consultation with the followers of the cult in the area, with due consideration to caste status, appoint a number of officers.

These officers are the local representatives of the Kshatriyas. In the course of playing this administrative-cum-ritual role the Kshatriyas also administer to caste customs and traditions (*Achar*, *Vichar*) of the followers of this cult, which technically falls in the framework of caste status and tradition. They settle disputes and issue orders or instructions. Cases of dispute about offices in these minor temples have been referred to the Kshatriyas by the court for final settlement. There is ample evidence in support of this. On the contrary, I find no evidence of Jangams touring places, meeting followers of the cult and settling any disputes. There is no evidence that the Shivapur Jangam family have ever lived in Kshetra. For these and similar reasons, it is possible that the Kshatriyas were the founders of the temple.

The ritual items involved in this cult portray violence. The change of professional tradition on the part of the Kshatriyas could be explained as a religious reinterpretation of their military tradition. '*Mallari Mahatme*', a Kannada book, describes the Marthanda Bhairava incarnation of Shiva, briefly recapitulating the divine war waged in which the demon Malla was destroyed by Shiva. Hence Malla Ari—the enemy of Malla and the name of the place Kshetra, where Malla attained salvation.

The philosophical implication of the myth is that good triumphs and evil succumbs: it is the duty of the ruler to uphold good (*Rajadharma*). The Kshatriyas of Kshetra have done so :

- A. By assuming the 'sword-bearers' office, defending symbolically the secular interest of the deity i.e., the temple.
- B. As founders of the temple, today they are its proprietors and as proprietors they have assumed leadership over the cult and also a [sort of spiritual teacherhood over the followers of the cult.
  - 1. As they appoint people to administer the minor temple.
  - 2. As they administer to the caste customs and traditions of the followers of the cult.
  - 3. As they bless and bestow various emblems on votaries who dedicate themselves to the service of the deity in one way or another.

## 2. The Temple Cult

The cult of Kshetra Linga temple has both a local and a regional 'spread'. Srinivas has divided Hinduism into four categories: "All-India Hinduism, Peninsular Hinduism, Regional Hinduism and Local Hinduism."<sup>1</sup> All-India Hinduism he describes as 'Sanskritic Hinduism', while the other three are variant forms at different levels, descending to 'popular Hinduism' as practised at the village level.

The myth that supports the Kshetra Linga cult will be taken as a starting point, a myth which links the cult to 'All-India Hinduism.' Local and regional variations are also to be seen in the various elements that go to make up the cult. In the literary absence of an adequate analysis of specific cults from other parts of India, it is hard to decide the extent to which it exhibits common features with other cults and the differences which distinguish it from other cults. The cult of Kshetra Linga is perhaps unique in its own way.

The Kshetra Linga deity is not a mere village deity. As the centre of a cult it can be described as having a regional spread though falling short of 'Peninsular Hinduism.' The cult is widespread and covers many parts of South India. People from the states of Mysore, Andhra and Maharashtra are its followers. Linguistic, political and geographical barriers have not prevented the spread of the cult.

The diverse people drawn from different linguistic and cultural areas who participate in the cult make it more significant. Kshetra is meaningful to outsiders because it is also the centre of the cult.

1. Srinivas, M.N. 1952, *Op. Cit*, p. 213.



As the centre of the cult, the village acquires a strength that is above what is supplied by internal factors.

In the process of describing the elements of the cult, I shall show the religious interdependence of castes in Kshetra. An analysis of the extent to which the temple cult brings the village people together, in spite of the fact that there is a cleavage between the two high Hindu caste-groupings, will highlight the structural unity of the village.

The nature of the cult is supported by a mythology, which brings it nearer to the Sanskritic ideal and links it to all-India Hinduism. The myth is recounted in the *Padma Purna*, and tells of the 'Marthanda Bhairava' incarnation of Shiva (when Shiva is said to have had a single face with three eyes and four arms). Here I call it by the popular name 'Kshetra Linga', after the 'self-generated' Linga—the symbol of Shiva—found and worshipped in the temple at Kshetra. Mallari Mahatme,<sup>1</sup> a Kannada book tells the story which runs as follows.

"Mallasura and Manikasura, two demon brothers, extracted a promise (vara) from Brahma by undertaking a severe penance. The promise was to the effect that the demons would be invincible to all known powers put together." Indian mythology abounds in such stories of demons and others doing severe penance in order to obtain some favour from a divine power. Once their wish is granted, they become powerful and frequently indulge in cruel acts. This again necessitates divine intervention to punish the harassing person. For instance, Ravana, the demon hero who stole Sita, wife of Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, was one such.

"Armed with the gift of invincibility, Mallasura and Manikasura started harassing people. The *rishis* who sought divine help to put an end to this misery, found out that of the 'Hindu Trinity' of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, only Shiva was capable of suppressing the demons. Shiva disguised himself as Marthanda Bhairawa, and this incarnation was a necessary counterpart for the destruction of the enemy. So the divine power as well as the army which went to fight the demons were in disguise."

The myth is acted out in ritual. The modern votaries of the diety are said to constitute the army of 'seven crores' which fought against the demons. The pilgrims as well as the votaries, hail not the

1. Kulkarni, Y.G., 1935, *Sree Mallari Mahatme*.

name of the deity, but shout 'Elukoti', which literally means 'seven crores'. Certain emblems are bestowed on the votaries by the Kshatriyas. These emblems are by no means confined to seven types, so that they could be thought of as representing the 'seven crores'.

The pilgrims who come to Kshetra are generally the followers of the cult with Kshetra Linga as their family deity. From among the followers of the cult come the votaries who dedicate themselves to serve the deity in a variety of ways. A brief description of the nature and varieties of dedication, which are the hallmark of the cult, is necessary.

### 3. Forms of Dedication

I have already pointed out that dedication takes place among followers of the cult who normally have the Kshetra Linga for their family deity. A person may dedicate himself or herself to serve the deity in one or another way for various reasons. Individual misfortune or sickness may make them receive one or more of the emblems which I will mention below.

The ceremonial bestowing of emblems by the Kshatriyas on the votaries constitutes the core of the dedication. The emblems are kept with the votaries throughout their life. They worship the emblems at home and they undertake a pilgrimage to Kshetra carrying these emblems with them and render services in the prescribed form to the deity during festive occasions. Emblems become family possessions and they pass from father to son and mother-in-law to daughter-in-law. Families possessing any one of the emblems, therefore, are under an obligation to dedicate one of their members.

A *Gorava* is the ritual name for a special class of dedicated persons. Both men and women can become Goravas. A Gorava wears a long coat of handwoven black blanket (*Kambali Angi*), on which tridents (*Trisula*), marked in contrasting colours, are sometimes sewn. He or she normally carries a bell (*Gante*), and a bowl (*Doni*), a rattle (*Damaruga*), and a bag containing consecrated turmeric powder (*Bhandara Battalu*). Sometimes, the person also wears a cowrie (*Kavade*) round his neck, with a huge multi-coloured turban on his head. The dress gives a distinctive style to Goravas.

The person intending to dedicate himself will bring his own emblems which are consecrated by the touch of a Kshatriya. The Kshatriya hands over the emblems and blesses the votary. The bestowing of these emblems is a source of revenue to the temple and to the officiating Kshatriya. The Government has fixed the rate of

fees for bestowing different emblems. In addition, the votaries will normally give a ceremonial fee to the officiating Kshatriya.

I have met both men and women Goravas and have learned the circumstances under which they vowed to dedicate themselves as Goravas to serve the deity. A Lambadi tribal woman told me that she miscarried four or five times, and so she vowed to become a Gorava. Since then she has had two children who are doing well. Gorava emblems are bestowed on both sexes, and on all persons irrespective of caste.

Dedication, therefore, is open to all castes, although it is mostly low caste men who avail themselves of the opportunity. The higher the status of the caste, the fewer are the people who dedicate themselves as Goravas. This may partly be due to the fact that Gorava men busy themselves with begging in the name of the deity, which Brahmins and Lingayats do not do.

Further in certain ritual situations a Gorava will enjoy a temporarily higher status which exceeds the secular status of the person. Pilgrims put ceremonial food offerings first into the bowls of the Goravas. This is interpreted as offering food to the representatives of the deity. This practice ignores caste distinctions. The person who offers food to a Gorava, is blessed by him in the name of the deity. In this act they are not supposed to ask each others caste status. Many Goravas assured me that they do not ask the caste status of the pilgrim although he himself may declare his caste.

There is a belief that the food served in the bowl, irrespective of the caste status of the giver, becomes sanctified, for the bowl has the power to purify. I did not come across a Brahmin or a Kshatriya Gorava, and there were only a few Lingayat Goravas by comparison with non-Lingayats and Untouchables. The practice of accepting food in a ritual situation from all castes probably accounts for a smaller number of Goravas from higher castes.

Dedication and nature of duties follow caste status, and to some extent sex differences are also important. Only a few women, as compared to men, have become Goravas. Only a few non-Lingayat women have become Goravas and they do not normally go out begging. No woman of Kshetra has dedicated herself as a Gorava.

In Kshetra, most Kurubas, Marathas and Kanchaveeras have dedicated themselves as Goravas. In fact, the locality where most Kurubas live is known as Goravageri.

The temple does not maintain any list of dedicated persons.



Dedication of Goravas also takes place at Shivaragudda in Dharwar district and other places where there are similar temples. Geographical mobility and the wide geographical spread of the cult make it difficult to estimate the number of Goravas.

Individuals dedicate themselves voluntarily and their role is necessarily a voluntary one. The Kuruba Goravas of Kshetra and Goravas elsewhere are involved in an administrative system of small shrines. The small shrines house either a miniature deity of the Kshetra Linga or a trident of stone. These small shrines are looked upon as counterparts of the Kshetra Linga temple and are worshipped by the followers of the cult in that area.

The followers of the cult in a given area are said to constitute a '*Gudikattu*'. A Gudikattu is the outcome of a larger concentration of the followers of the cult. Various offices, such as *Yajaman* and *Ganachari* (President and Secretary) and so forth, in such small shrines are distributed among the followers of the cult. The Kshatriyas of Kshetra, in consultation with the followers of the cult in the area, with due consideration to caste status, appoint a number of officers.

Another variety of dedication is as bearers of a whip (*Cheddu*) or a torch (*Divatige*). Quite a large number of men dedicate themselves as bearers of one or the other. Their services are confined to festival and ceremonial occasions in the temple. Individuals carry their own torch and oil and burn the torch in front of the temple or the deity. Many pilgrims make vows to give oil to the deity. Sometimes, they give the oil to the torch bearers, but generally it is given inside the temple to light lamps before the deity.

The whip bearers (*Cheddu*) also bring their own. They dance to a slow rhythm in front of the deity or the temple and flagellate themselves. In the course of the act they become half frantic! According to the myth, the whip bearers are said to be the artillery in the 'divine army' which fought the demons.

The services of a torch-bearer or bearer of a whip are not sought by pilgrims, whereas Gorava services are sought by pilgrims. Goravas are also fed on ceremonial occasions. In contrast to the change of status of a Gorava in a ritual situation, the status of a bearer of a torch or a whip remains the same. There is no situation in which his status increases or falls. He is not called upon to render ritual services or accept ceremonial food or go begging. These factors encourage recruitment from among the higher castes, and in Kshetra, many Lingayat families possess either a whip or a torch and

many of them come to serve the deity on most festive occasions.

The bestowing and bearing of these emblems again cut across caste distinctions. Emblems are bestowed on men irrespective of caste. When they come to serve the deity on festive occasions, they all stand in rows so that Untouchable torch and whip bearers are bound to mix with those belonging to higher castes. While offering worship the individual votary is so engrossed with himself that he seldom bothers to find out the caste of the person standing next to him.

Everyone offering services is bound to observe certain rules of cleanliness or of ritual purity ; for example one should have bathed, and have abstained on that day from meat and alcohol. The votaries, as well as some of the followers of the cult, also observe other austerities such as partial fasting on Sundays. The cult has a strong Brahmanical orientation, and hence no animals are slaughtered before the deity or in the name of the deity. The offerings put into the Gorava bowls often consist of dry pancake (rotti), or cooked rice mixed with curd (buthi). Sometimes plantains mixed with jaggery and ghee are served to Goravas by pilgrims in fulfilment of a vow.

Still another form of dedication consists in receiving a fan and a betel-leaf-bag. The fan (*chowri*) and betel-leaf-bag (*sanchi*) are bestowed individually or jointly on women. Individual votaries come to serve the deity on festive occasions. They gently fan the deity as it is taken out in procession. The betel-leaf-bag holders offer betel leaves and areca nuts mixed with spices to the deity, offerings which normally go to the Kshatriya households.

The bestowing and bearing of these emblems cut across caste distinctions. But what is striking here is that a woman of a higher caste, say a Brahmin, would come to the temple at the time of worship, perform her services to the deity, and go home. The women of other castes, especially non-Lingayats and Untouchables, stay in groups to walk behind the procession. They also sing folksongs to the glory of the deity while rendering services.

Most Untouchable women who have been provided with the above emblems have concurrently become Basavis, although this obligation is not implicit in the act of bestowal. These emblems are bestowed on married, unmarried and even widowed women. But to an Untouchable unmarried woman, the emblem is a short cut to becoming a Basavi. Government legislation against the dedication of women as Basavis has made the Kshatriyas aware of the dangers of bestowing the emblems on Untouchable women.



It is to avert individual sickness or misfortune that people dedicate themselves to serve the deity. Hence it would be wrong on the part of the Kshatriyas to refuse to bestow the emblems on women on the grounds that they will become Basavis. The Kshatriyas cannot prevent them from becoming Basavis, since there is no way of preventing them. Once they receive the emblems and perform services for the deity, the other things they do are their own concern, and the Kshatriyas are less bothered about it. The authority of the Kshatriyas over individual votaries is less strict and they are incapable of checking women from becoming Basavis after receiving the emblems. Most Madiga and Kanchaveera Basavis in Kshetra are dedicated to the Kshetra Linga deity.

Besides the major forms of worship described above, votaries and pilgrims undertake other forms of services when they make vows to the deity. Pilgrims, when they visit Kshetra, busy themselves with consulting the oracle of 'Round Stones' kept in a row in the temple premises. They consult the oracle about various matters, such as, the success of a project, a wedding, the desire to have a son, the cause of a misfortune or sickness, and so on.

Individuals worship the stone, pose the question in silence and then lift it. A typical example might run as follows. Addressing the spirit in the stone, 'A' will say, "If sickness is due to negligence in service to the Kshetra Linga, be light when I lift you. Otherwise remain heavy and immovable". Individuals repeat the saying and lift the stone thrice to confirm it, sometimes alternating the statement. If all the three attempts should produce an unequivocal result, then the devotee or pilgrim will make further vows.

If the verdict is that sickness is due to neglecting the Kshetra Linga, they may make a vow to crawl (*Shastanga*) in all austerity from the river to the temple or go round crawling in the temple compound itself. In this way, a good number of people keep themselves busy during the annual February festival, in the temple.

There is no distinction here of caste or of sex, though in fact such devotees are mostly from among the lower castes. After completing the crawling, individuals have a ceremonial wash in front of the temple and change into new clothes. The old clothes, if the parties do not claim them, are generally the perquisites of local Untouchables.

The main theme of this chapter is the temple cult, its unifying nature overriding the cleavage among local high caste Hindus. It has a local, and also a wider significance. The significance of the



cult in a wide area results from the frequent visit of devotees and pilgrims to Kshetra. The pilgrims are a financial asset to the temple, to the Kshatriyas and to the village. In fact, each Kshatriya youth leads a batch of pilgrims coming from the area in which he is touring during other parts of the year. Since he knows them, he takes pleasure in treating the pilgrims kindly and playing host when they visit Kshetra during festive occasions. The pilgrims acknowledge this and reward the Kshatriyas, with some amount of money, be it large or small.

Festival time is also time for a large number of stalls to sell coconuts, plantains, and other ceremonial objects such as vermilion, turmeric powder, and incense used by pilgrims for worshipping the deity. In addition to the existing shops in Kshetra, quite a few Lingayat families open temporary shops. Quite a few new shops sell groceries, sweetmeats and other eatables. Some of the owners of these shops come from distant places such as Davangere, Ranebennur and Harapanahalli to Kshetra.

Local hotels are always patronized by the incoming pilgrims, whether they come for an overnight stay or to stay two or three days. Practically every full moon day is a special day of worship in the Kshetra Linga temple, when devotees and pilgrims come to Kshetra. But the largest number of pilgrims are gathered during January, February and May. Brief descriptions of each of these festivals follow.

#### 4. The Harvest Festival

The harvest festival of 'communal thanksgiving' has a regional significance. After having gathered the crops, people come to celebrate the harvest festival in Kshetra during the full moon in January. They bring all varieties of new grains and cook them in Kshetra. People normally spend about two days here. The communal thanksgiving is described as '*Mudde Hunnime*' in the vernacular, when jowar flour is cooked and made into balls and is eaten with curry.

Each group of pilgrims coming from a particular area is looked after by a Kuruba Gorava, whom the Kshatriyas appoint as an attendant (*Ganachari*). It is his duty to supply the needs of the group such as water, firewood and new mud pots. Such groups are also formed on an inter-caste basis and thus cut across caste divisions.

During the 1960 harvest festival, a group of pilgrims from Hadagalli included Lingayats and non-Lingayats and they told me

that even Untouchables may be included in these groups. The members of a group make contributions in kind, mostly from the harvested crops. The communal dinner is cooked by the high caste members of the group. After the food is cooked, part of it is first offered to the Goravas who bless them in the name of the deity. Then the high caste people serve food to all in the group and sometimes feed others. Generosity is a virtue, and is highly valued as such. The restrictions on the free movement of the sexes are considerably relaxed.

After the communal dinner, whatever grain or flour are left over, are given to the attending Kuruba Gorava. There is a mystical belief in this kind of payment. The belief is that raw materials especially should not be taken back home. Each constituent household in the group will also carry a portion of the cooked food. This consecrated food (*Prasada*) is given to the other members of the household. They also mix part of this consecrated food with grain which the agriculturists set apart for the next sowing season.

The communal thanks giving is to express their gratitude to the God Kshetra Linga for good rains and crops. It also includes a supplication to God for better rains and bumper crops the following year, when the party will come to Kshetra with a still larger quantity of grain and celebrate the festival anew. Kshetra villagers also participate in the celebrations, though often with less apparent enthusiasm than the pilgrims. They send gifts of food and coconut to the temple. It is as much a festive occasion for the villagers and agriculturists as it is for people from outside.

The village youths take the opportunity afforded by these occasions to exhibit their talents, in order to win admiration and prestige, and enhance the reputation of the village. During the 1960 January celebrations the village youths staged a drama on the night of the festival. It was the story of a pious Veerasaiva woman. The general implications of the drama had an appeal to the Veerasaiva way of life as well as a moralizing effect on the audience. It was both entertainment and religious propaganda. The village square was packed full with pilgrims. The entertainment that the villagers offered, among other things, must have impressed the pilgrims. In return, the villagers hope that they will speak well of Kshetra and its people when they go home. In this way the reputation of the village will be enhanced.

### 5. The importance of the February Festival and the Myth

The largest gathering of pilgrims is for the Annual February festival. It is known as '*Bharata Hunnime*,' and it starts on the full moon day in February. The festival lasts for ten to twelve days, but it is the last three or four days which attract the largest crowds.

According to the myth, Lord Marthanda Bhairava waits silently with his seven crores of armies for ten days. The demons are reduced to submission early in the morning on the eleventh day. The same evening there is the event of foretelling (*Karnika*), a ceremony which the divine couple witness. This is to find out what the future has in store. On the twelfth evening the 'miracle play' (*Pavada*) of breaking 'iron chains' and piercing the human body in the limb and forearm with sharp iron implements is performed. In this way human blood is symbolically shed to satisfy the blood thirsty demons, who are now reduced to submission.

The 1960 February festival was not very well attended owing to poor harvests in the surrounding areas for the previous two or three years. Yet on the eleventh day there was a crowd of some thirty to forty thousand people. In fact, shopkeepers and business people had come to Kshetra a week before the celebrations. They brought all kinds of stalls for selling such articles as fancy goods, hardware and metals, ready-made clothes, groceries, pots, and vegetables and fruits. There were also hotels, a mobile talkie, a circus and a drama group. There was a sudden upsurge of activity in and around the village. Most pilgrims camped near the river for shade and water. Many of them came on foot and by bullock-carts. Many pilgrims also came to Kshetra by bus, for extra bus services were allowed by the Government during festival days.

The road connecting Kshetra with the river Tungabhadra was overcrowded with all sorts of people, while beggars lined up the south gate of the temple, half-way from the river. The villagers as well as wealthy pilgrims fed the beggars. It is held to be meritorious to give alms to the lame, the blind and the maimed.

During the 1960 festival a rich peasant from a neighbouring village arranged to feed the poor for three days. He had undertaken this by way of fulfilling a vow for two years. He thought that since God had been kind to him by sending him rich harvests, he could use part of it to feed the poor and the lame as a religious duty which would please God. The large shed, cooking utensils and other equipment provided by the afore-mentioned peasant were striking to any stranger's eye. Religious observances give a man an enhanced status



and added prestige.

Parties of pilgrims also lead decorated oxen in a ceremonial procession from the river to the temple. They engage local pipers and Madigas to beat drums and lead the procession. This gives an impressive air to the procession. Often they bring bandsmen who are well-known from distant places. During 1960, the wealthy Lingayat peasant who fed the poor had also invited a group of bandsmen from a distant village in Dharwar district.

Kshetra villagers often critically judge between the superior band music played by outsiders and the traditional tunes played by local pipers. Ambition to acquire prestige and enhance one's status are at the root of this kind of display. Time, distance and financial considerations prevent the villagers from bringing in the strange bandsmen into the village. Yet the temple cult throws open many opportunities which widen the villagers' knowledge of things and persons and thus lay the foundations for increasing inter-village contacts.

Every pilgrim visits the temple and offers worship. The February festival is the largest source of revenue for the Village Panchayat Board, for temple funds, and, to some extent, for the Kshatriyas, and certainly for all business people, local and otherwise. My purpose here is not to analyse the significance of the festival and its economic relationships and rewards, and I am only pointing out a number of ways in which the villagers come in contact with outsiders and vice-versa.

It is true that the profits from the temple cult are the one major cause of the widening cleavage between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas. To analyse the economic role of the temple would be to bring out many features of this crucial intercaste relationship. Since, however, I am concerned with the temple cult as an institution which helps the local people to see themselves as a unified community, I am postponing a discussion of the economic role of the temple for the present.

On the first day of the festival, i.e., 4th February, 1960, *milk* was boiled in the main temple towards the evening. Gifts of milk were sent to the temple by many local families. All this milk was collected in a vessel and boiled on a ceremonial fire made of cowdung cakes (*kadukullu*). The direction in which the milk overflows is noted down by the Brahmin priest and the agriculturists. There is a belief that the directions in which the milk overflows are directions which will have good rainfall and good crops in the coming year.

The same evening, about 8 p.m., the Kshetra Linga deity was

taken out in a procession to a special open space called '*Denkana Mardi*' or '*Appana Mardi*' about half a mile to the east of the village. This is described as '*Kadabina Kalaga*' day. Men hit one another with *Kadabu*. *Kadabu* is a solid preparation shaped like Swiss rolls. It is made from jowar flour and cut into pieces two to three inches long. Hitting one another with these pieces is a ceremonial observance, and no one may take offence when hit.

The deity stays on the Mardi for the next ten days. Several people make vows to keep watch over the place and do other services while the deity is there. A ceremonial fire is lit and is kept burning all the ten days. Logs of wood for burning are supplied by individual devotees. The sacred ash, as well as the fire is carried to the main temple on the evening of the eleventh day. In former times, the fire was used to light the opium offered to the deity by the devotees. The Government has banned this practice now.

The Mardi priest is a Kuruba. The priest takes a ceremonial bath daily before he offers worship. Water for this purpose is supplied from Guruvathi. The Kuruba who foretells (*karnika*), stays on the Mardi for ten days with the 'sacred bow' by his side. The bow belongs to the temple and is brought out only on this occasion. Several pilgrims and local people who have made vows to the deity feed and supply water to the people who keep watch. The watch-party consists of members of all castes, who participate in daily worship.

The watch-party consists of both men and women, who supply wild flowers for worship, play on big drums (*nagari*) and circle around the deity when the daily worship is in progress, bowing down in all directions in remembrance of the presiding deities of those directions. During 1960, the watch-party consisted of a few Lingayats, non-Lingayats, Untouchables, as well as Lambadas. Many of them were local people, while the others came from nearby villages.

All this time, the Brahmin priest carries on his daily round of worship at the temple in the village. He does it in silence. He does not ring the ceremonial bell nor utter sacred verses aloud. In fact, the tongues of all the big bells in the temple are tied. The belief is that God keeps utter silence until the defeat of the demons on the eleventh day. Thus there should be no sound of bells in the temple. This silence is seldom observed, for every incoming pilgrim makes it a point to reach and ring the big bells hang from the ceiling of the temple. There is more noise then, than during the rest of the year !



The Kshatriyas, however, do not enforce the rule of 'silence' by explaining the significance of the myth to the pilgrims. Many pilgrims do not know the mythology underlying 'Mallari Mahatme' or the significance of the incarnation of Shiva as Marthanda Bhairava. This does not worry the pilgrims. And they are glad to carry on their ritual services to the deity individually and collectively, if they also happen to be votaries.

On the eleventh day, during 1960, (it was the 14th of February), another image of the deity was taken in procession to Denkana Mardi. There are four or five sets of metal images of the deity (*Utsava Murti*) which are taken out in procession at different times. This time a huge pointed demon's head was adjusted below the image of the deity, and the demon's head was covered with a cloth. The procession started from the temple at about 4.30 a.m., and there was complete silence until it went near Denkana Mardi. Suddenly the whole crowd shouted and a Kshatriya youth uncovered the face of the demon. This symbolises the idea that the enemy is overcome by God and his forces. Hence it is time to rejoice.

A Kshatriya youth of the senior lineage (there are three lineages among them) accompanies the deity on this occasion. He stays at Denkana Mardi the whole day. He observes many austerities. Among other things the most important is that he should not attend to calls of nature. He is seated on a ceremonial chair when devotees and pilgrims fall on his feet and are given consecrated turmeric powder. People give a ceremonial fee to the Kshatriya youth. The austerities observed by the Kshatriya youth are certainly of Brahmanical origin.

The fact of adjusting the demon's head below the image of the deity has an important implication. According to the myth, the demon by his own choice begs God to shelter him under the 'divine foot'. Hence the practice. Devotion has a 'positive' and 'negative' connotation. Positive devotion is in accordance with God's dictates. Negative devotion (*Virodha Bhakti*) is to defy the commands of God and surrender oneself to God through opposition. Here the demons are believed to have won the favour of God by the second method.

Towards the evening of 14th February 1960, the Kshatriya trustee of the temple went in a procession along with another image of the Kshetra Linga deity. But before that, the divine consort, Gangimalamma, as she is called in the myth, was carried by Brahmin priests about noon time and was seated near *Ammana Mardi*, at



some distance from Denkana Mardi. According to the myth, the Goddess comes to congratulate her husband upon his success in the war and meets him half way, when they both witness the ceremony of foretelling. As soon as the trustee reached the Denkana Mardi, the deity, the Kshatriya youth and the Kuruba Gorava with the sacred bow, all moved towards Ammana Mardi.

The Kuruba Gorava was given consecrated turmeric powder by the trustee. A few devotees held the bow erect, and he worshipped it. After this he claimed the bow. Half way he looked on the crowd and in all directions. He advanced a few steps, then looked again before he pronounced the forecast. There was a sizeable crowd of people who had gathered to hear it. In fact, a small bamboo enclosure had been put up for the purpose. The police wielded batons in order to prevent the crowd from breaking into the enclosure.

The forecast was not heard by many people, but it was soon broadcasted from person to person and later a notice to this effect was hung in the temple. The 1960 forecast was '*Savanidhi Parak*' ('All wealth is equi-divisible, Amen.') 'People took it as a good sign and interpreted it as meaning that the following year would be moderately good in terms of rain and crops. The agrarian nature of the economy, dependent upon capricious rainfall, naturally keeps people anxious. A good forecast on this score not only reduces their anxiety but makes them hopeful.

The act of foretelling is neither oracular nor based on astrological calculations. They both involve consulting a second agent such as consulting the oracle of 'round stones'. The man foretelling is believed to do so by supernatural guidance in this situation by the grace of the Kshetra Linga. The performance is spontaneous and nobody consults him for anything else. He observes many austerities and partial fasting for ten days and foretells on the tenth evening. He was perfectly conscious on the tenth morning of his fast during February 1960. But after foretelling in the evening, he was almost unconscious and was carried to the temple by his followers.

After this the trustee's party returned to the temple. But the Kshatriya youth stayed on at the Mardi when the Kanchaveeras staged a 'miracle play' (Pavada).<sup>1</sup> About 8 p.m., the Kshatriya

1. Pavada literally means 'miracle'. The performance of different kinds of Pavada are strictly confined to temple ceremonies and have religious connotations.

youth and the deity came towards the temple in a procession. As the deity entered the temple compound, before the 'miracle play' of shedding human blood (stopped by Madras Government for some time) was revived by the Kanchaveeras in the early 1950's, shepherds used to supply a newly born sheep or goat, which was waved before the deity. The baby sheep died instantly, perhaps owing to the vigour of the movement. But the implication is that the demon devoured it.

The above practice may be a relic of human sacrifice, which is said to have existed in olden times. It later gave rise to a milder form of sacrifice when human blood was ceremonially shed. It is said that in olden times Kanchaveeras used to cut off their heads (*Sirasa Pavada*) and wave them before the deity. The belief is that demons live on human blood. Since the demon here is subjugated by God, it is necessary to shed human blood ceremonially to satisfy the blood thirsty demon.

The ceremonial shedding of human blood was stopped by the Madras Government nearly three decades ago. After the merger of Bellary district with Mysore state, the Chief Minister and the Home Minister visited Kshetra. The Kanchaveeras made special representations to the Home Minister for the revival of the ritual. They performed the 'miracle play' in his presence to assure him that it is not very harmful. They also convinced him that non-performance on the other hand brought misfortune and sickness to them.

The 'miracle play' is an initiation ceremony for Kanchaveera youths and men cannot get married without undergoing it. When the 'miracle play' was suspended by the Madras Government, the Kanchaveeras of Kshetra used to cross the Tungabhadra and do it before the Kshetra Linga deity at Chikka Kshetra near Savanur in Dharwar district. The Bombay Government had not laid down such restrictions.

The 14th of February, 1960, happened to be a Sunday. Sunday is a favourite and special ritual day for the Kshetra Linga. There is a belief that pilgrims should not leave Kshetra on a Sunday (*giri bidabaradu*). Many pilgrims were also prompted to stay back and witness the 'miracle plays' on the following day. The miracle plays were performed by two sets of people on the evening of 15th February 1960.

The Kanchaveeras performed the miracle play by piercing their left legs and left arms with iron implements (*shastra pavada*). It is these which are really exciting to the crowds. The temple

compound was packed full, when caste and sex distinctions mattered little. High caste spectators did not keep any distance just because the performers were Untouchables. Indeed the police had to control the over-enthusiastic crowd, some of whom had climbed to the roof of the temple and were witnessing it from the terrace.

A Kanchaveera who undertakes to participate in the 'miracle play' observes some austerities. Chief among them is the abstinence from sexual intercourse on the day prior to his performance. His wife's 'shade' should not fall on him. So she normally keeps away from the house. During this period it is only a mother or someone standing in a similar relationship who should cook and feed him. The Kanchaveeras also maintain that when they perform the 'miracle play', the shadow of a menstruating woman should not fall on them. For if it did, the pierced portion of the body—the wound—instead of healing quickly as it normally does, would fester. The above observations of ceremonial purity and abhorrence of pollution are indications of the strong Brahmanical orientation of the cult.

During the 1960 February festival one Kanchaveera youth pierced his leg and another his arm. They normally wear ritual robes. A third man operated on both of them. The Kanchaveeras accompanied the deity in a procession. As the deity was about to cross the main temple at the back, the Kanchaveeras came forward and the deity stopped. A black blanket was spread on the ground. The iron and other implements were placed on it ready to be worshipped. A Kshatriya gave them some consecrated turmeric powder which they smeared all over their bodies. The pilgrims put small coins on the blanket, which go to the Kanchaveeras on this occasion. The Kanchaveeras praised God. They broke the coconuts and worshipped the implements. A group of Kanchaveeras, including the performer, kept saying 'Ha, Ha,' at high pitched voices. This apparently had the effect of sending the person undergoing the operation into a trance. Suddenly he became silent, almost quiet. The crowd was also silent.

The operator now picked up the fine pointed steel rod, four feet long and an inch and a half in diameter, and thrust it in the outstretched left lower leg of the youth with the ease of an expert surgeon, and pulled the rod through at the other side. The rod was stained with blood but there was only a little blood from the wound in the leg. Some consecrated turmeric powder was put on it and the leg was bandaged. The wound heals in less than a week,



although the scar remains. The man suffered no pain. He was walking normally after the performance.

A forked iron implement, the top of which was wound around with a cloth dipped in oil, was thrust into the left forearm of another man by the operator. The oil-cloth was lit and the man waved it before the deity. This is known as waving the 'sacred lamp' (*arti belaguvudu*). The operator removed the blade, and the youth shook his hand so that a few drops of blood fell on the ground. The wound was smeared with some consecrated turmeric powder but it was not bandaged.

After this the deity moved forward in a procession and came before the temple of the Goddess. Now it was the turn of the Marathas to undertake another 'miracle play'. They received the consecrated turmeric powder from a Kshatriya and worshipped a strong iron chain some eight to ten feet in length. They hooked the chain into a hole in a small stone pillar. A man holding the other end of the chain moved sideways vigorously, while two people kept pace with him at both the sides. In a few seconds, he pulled the chain and broke it into two. This is known as *Sarapali Pavada*.

With the above ritual acts, the February festival came to an end. The festive mood pervades the village for about a fortnight. Actually, people are kept busy in connection with the temple for nearly a month. Their activities begin with the white-washing of the temple. Male and female labourers are recruited locally. During 1960, Lingayats whitewashed the innermost shrine, while non-Lingayats, such as Kurubas and Barikes, decorated the outer part of the temple. Even Untouchable Kanchaveeras were recruited. They white-washed the outer walls of the temple, supplied and spread earth on the parts of the temple terrace which were leaking during the heavy rains.

Temporary sheds were erected for select pilgrims within the temple compound. A canteen to feed the Scouts, Reserve Police and other festival officers was set up within the temple premises. Groceries, milk and milk products for the canteen were bought—in part—locally. Cooperation among different castes is necessary to undertake all these activities. The villagers' share of work and participation in the festival is certainly greater than that of the pilgrims. Indeed, intercaste co-operation is indispensable on many ceremonial occasions in the temple.

The Untouchables have each their share of work. The Madigas beat drums and are in charge of the sandals of the deity. The Kancha-

veeras perform the 'miracle play'. The Cheluvadis provide pipe music. The Marathas, Kurubas, Lingayats, the Brahmin priest, and the Kshatriyas, all have specific duties necessary for the success of the festival. Informants told me that the grandeur of the celebrations now a days is nothing to what it was in the first two decades of the present century. The distribution of ritual roles in the temple is no longer made on a village-wide basis to-day. But the 'star performers' are still local people.

The visiting pilgrims are observers, and at best active participants in so far as they undertake to serve the deity in an individual capacity. An analysis of a single festival like this brings to light the ritual unity and interdependence of the local castes as against outsiders. In several ritual situations, relations are formed which not only cut across caste barriers, but strengthen intercaste relationships. To this extent, the temple cult is a unifying factor and the village appears to outsiders as a solidary unit.

#### 6. The Festival of 'Pre-sowing (Age Hunnime)' celebrated in May

Another important festival which is a part of the temple cult is celebrated in May. This is the wedding ceremony of the deity. Elaborate rituals are observed. The local Brahmins play the role of the bride's party and the Kshatriyas of the groom's party in the 'divine wedding'. The celebrations draw many pilgrims to Kshetra. The entire period covers about twenty days, of which only the first week and the last two or three days are important for the pilgrims. The divine couple go in a wooden car (*teru*) in a procession. As it is also the wedding season, many newly-married couples visit Kshetra at this time to see the temple spire (*shikara*), the sight of which is believed to be auspicious.

The festival is also described as 'Age Hunnime', since the celebrations start during the full moon in May. As the agricultural year starts shortly after this, people are anxious to learn which particular crop will grow well in the coming year. With the start of the wedding ceremony for the deity, nine varieties of seeds, mostly of major crops grown in the area such as jowar, green-gram and so forth, are sown in nine new earthenware bowls.

On the seventh day of the celebrations, the earthenware bowls are set out on a platform in front of the temple of the Goddess Gangima'amma. During May 1960, on the occasion that I observed this performance, except for paddy all the other seedlings had sprouted well. By evening there was not a single plant left in the



eight mud bowls, for the pilgrims had taken them all. They carried them off to mix them with the grain they sowed or with the seedlings transplanted in the field. This is believed to additionally ensure good crops, since the ceremonial portion of the crops which are carried from the Kshetra temple itself are mixed with the seedlings.

On the day following the car festival, i.e., 12th May 1960, the Kanchaveeras and Marathas again undertook a 'miracle play'. The village and the temple compound was busy with pilgrims, and there was considerable festivity. Quite a few stalls appeared on the scene to sell eatables. Pilgrims are a source of income to the temple funds, the Kshatriyas and the village shopkeepers.

Towards the evening of the same day, the whole village was drawn to participate in a ceremonial play in which waters of various colours were poured together. This is described as 'playing with coloured water' (*Okaliyaduvudu*). The active participants were youths drawn from the Lingayat and non-Lingayat castes. They had prepared gallons of coloured water in a special pit (*Okaliguni*) in front of the temple. They dissolved large quantities of turmeric powder, vermillion, artificial dyes, and lime and put a small quantity of oil to make the colours fast. The water was worshipped and the Brahmin priest sprinkled it ceremonially on the deity and on the Kshatriyas. Afterwards, the youths began to fill their pitchers and chased their affines (people who stand to them in a 'joking relationship') and even friends to pour coloured water on them. This horse-play was confined to men. Since it is a ceremonial occasion nobody may take offence.

The celebrations of May that I witnessed started on the 6th and came to an end on the 24th of that month, when a mock marriage of a male and female Gorava took place. Many devotees camped in Kshetra for the whole period. They used to perform ritual services in the temple but were fed by the generous villagers. During May 1960 the devotee party consisted of about ten to fifteen men and women coming from distant places. They collected money and grain in the village, and also bought other things to give a communal dinner on the last day. In acknowledgement of the Kshatriya leadership of the temple cult, the devotee party gave a quantity of rice, wheat, jaggery and sundry other articles to the temple trustee's house.

The partners of the mock marriage were blessed by the trustee and they were given consecrated turmeric powder. When the marriage was over, a basketful of *Kankanams* were distributed



were distributed among women and young girls. Indeed, the assembled women rushed to get hold of the ceremonial Kankanams. There is a belief that the unmarried who manage to secure and wear it, will get married soon. The entire village took part in this. After this the Lingayat cooks who had prepared the communal dinner in the temple premises served the Goravas first, and gave the ceremonial food to the villagers afterwards.

The three major festivals described above are important occasions which draw crowds of multi-caste pilgrims from outside the village. The chief features of the celebrations are centred on agricultural operations. Irrespective of caste differences, people join hands to celebrate the festivals. The predominantly agricultural nature of the country, which is more a subsistence economy dependent upon natural rainfall, convinces the villagers that they can be happy and contented, and all will be well if only there is a bumper crop.

The role and place of agriculturists is sacred and receives ritual recognition. By comparison business and industry are subsidiary, insofar as they cannot supply Man with his basic need, namely food. Hence people turn to mystical beliefs to keep free from anxiety on this score. Everyone is thought to be directly dependent upon agricultural produce. Therefore there is need for co-operation among all people.

These and similar implications of the temple ritual reduces the antagonism between the local castes. An agriculturist cannot withhold his services and ceremonial observances in the temple on all these occasions simply because Kshatriyas are its proprietors. The Kshatriyas are well aware that their prestige and the importance of the temple as the centre of the cult, is dependent on the innumerable followers who are drawn from both agricultural and non-agricultural classes.

The non-agricultural class of labourers, business people and professionals participate in the cult with equal zeal as they are convinced of their dependence on the agriculturists. Agriculturists are the backbone of the country and the earthly saviours of mankind ! The strong belief in and the attributes of benevolence of agriculture and agriculturists, bind people together irrespective of caste differences. Divisive factors are temporarily forgotten. During the course of the ceremony, individuals and groups, irrespective of status, sex, or age, join in supplicating God with this end in view.

These ceremonies are additional to the other agricultural

ceremonies undertaken individually by each peasant at different times in an agricultural year. Individual observances keep people independent, perhaps self-centred. The feeling of security derived from these observances is restricted to individual households.

Communal security is not an extension of individual security. A community in a state of anxiety is a threat to individual security. Individual observances are buttressed by collective undertakings. An individual agriculturist extends his co-operation and undertakes to celebrate communal agricultural rites. These are shared by his fellow agriculturists in the village and agriculturists from the wider area. To this extent, the interests of the people are secured by participating in the Kshetra Linga temple cult. I would even go further and suggest that the very nature of the cult is responsible for its spread.

## 7. The Relationship between the Kshatriyas and the Devotees

The cult is not a sectarian cult involving people from a limited spectrum of castes as its followers. The all-inclusive nature of agriculture and agriculturists is at the root of the practice. The cult draws its followers from all castes, from the high caste Brahmins and Veerasaivas to the Untouchables and the tribal people, viz., the Lambadas. It also includes people professing diverse occupations.

The all-embracing nature and implications of the cult at once distinguish it from other cults organized around caste-groups and village deities. This also lends a distinctive character to the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple and supervision over the followers of the cult. The Kshatriyas are not 'family spiritual' teachers like the heads of Mutts, and they are not even 'personal spiritual' teachers like Jangams. Their supervisory role over the followers of the cult transcends both, and they form a class of religious leaders by themselves.

The role of the Kshatriyas as religious leaders is not based upon organized preaching of the principles of the cult. There is no set body of rules nor any religious instructions involved in this. The religious leadership of the Kshatriyas has an 'ascriptive value', i.e., hereditary. The power to assume and play the role is supposed to descend lineally in all male Kshatriyas of Kshetra from their ancestor, a half mythical figure, one Kapila Muni, the founder of the temple. None of the Kshatriyas have any training in the Hindu sacred texts, nor do they have high academic education. It is by tradition and not by training that male Kshatriyas are able to assume

supervisory roles over the devotees of the cult.

Since there is no religious training, the adherents of the cult find themselves unburdened by much religious instructions. Such of the votaries as receive emblems blessed by a Kshatriya elder, normally reward him with a ceremonial fee and render their services before the deity. The followers of the cult know and observe only those general principles which control the mode of worship of any deity. The observances are concerned with maintaining ceremonial purity, such as taking a bath before going to offer worship in the temple, abstaining from meat and liquor and so on. These practices would normally be undertaken as part of the worship of any deity in the Sanskrit pantheon.

The mass of people do not know who is in authority at the Kshetra temple, save for a general notion that he must be some high caste Hindu. This belief is supported by the fact that the Kshatriyas do not accept cooked food from the hands of the followers of the cult. The Kshatriyas accept articles of food, money and other gifts. This is akin to Brahmanical ritual superiority. The devotees of the cult have no means of competing against or equating themselves with the Kshatriyas. As followers of the cult they acknowledge the Kshatriya supervisory role.

Not only the devotees, but also people involved in the administration of small shrines outside Kshetra or those who have been appointed by the Kshatriyas to supervise the followers of the cult in a particular area, cannot easily disregard the Kshatriyas without at the same time abandoning the cult. The binding force is supplied by the cult itself and not by the Kshatriyas who preside over it, for the cult binds together the Kshatriya leaders and their followers.

The role and status of the Kshatriyas are enhanced in importance by a network of small shrines built in different places, in so far as the Kshatriyas control the administration of and ceremonies in these shrines also. Wherever there is any concentration of the followers of the cult, they normally erect a small shrine with a trident in stone called '*Sibara*'; sometimes a miniature deity modelled on the effigy of the Kshetra Linga is housed in a small temple. These are worshipped as counterparts of the Kshetra Linga deity itself.

The management of these shrines involves a hierarchy of offices. The Kshatriyas in consultation with the followers of the cult in the area, and with due consideration of the caste status of the followers, appoint a number of officers. These are the local



representatives of the Kshatriyas, and the Kshatriyas delegate their authority to them, so that they have supervisory power and can even bestow emblems on votaries in cases of emergency.

In the course of performing this administrative-cum-ritual role, the Kshatriyas also maintain the correct observance of the caste customs and traditions of the cult followers, for it falls within the framework of caste status and tradition. The followers of the cult in any given area may include more than one caste. They are said to constitute one 'religious order (*Gudikattu*).'

The members of the locally dominant caste, and other elders, are chosen to fill the offices of President (*Yajman*), Secretary (*Ganachari*), and so forth in the local shrines. With their help the Kshatriyas settle disputes and issue orders and instructions. Cases of disputes over the incumbency of offices in these minor temples have been referred to the Kshatriyas by the court for final settlement.

During 1939-40, two Okkaligas fought a case over the Presidentship of the temple at Mylarapatna near Mysore. The religious order consisted of Okkaligas and Upparas, of which the Okkaligas constituted a numerically dominant caste. The dispute over office was exacerbated by an allegation brought by one party against the other. According to this the second party was accused of having polluted the temple by entering and worshipping the deity, when they had contracted death pollution owing to the death of a close agnate. The party at fault was first required to pay fine to purify the temple. Finally, the Government referred the matter to the Kshatriyas of Kshetra to decide whose claim to the Presidentship was valid. The court judgment was in accordance with the statement of the Kshatriyas.

The notion that death pollution contaminates the temple giving rise to the need to purify it, is clearly a Brahmanical conception.

The wide range of small shrines established in honour of the Kshetra Linga all over Mysore, Andhra and Maharashtra, extends from Mudukuthore in the South to Jejjuri near Poona.<sup>1</sup> It is said that there are well over five hundred religious centres, built by the followers of the cult in different parts of the country. The Kshatriyas

1. I regret that I am unable to map out the spatial distribution of the cult owing to some technical difficulties. The temple has no records of this distribution. New religious orders may be opened without the knowledge of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra by their collaterals in Shivaragudda and Meenagondi. Further, the cult is so wide spread that any attempt to map out the area would involve going from village to village starting with the smallest administrative unit. There is evidence that the cult is still spreading.

have assumed supervisory role over quite a few of them. In fact, the followers of the cult are scattered all over South India, perhaps with the exception of Kerala and parts of Tamil Nadu. The devotees of the cult came to Kshetra from Bombay during the 1959 February festival. When I was in the field, devotees from Ananthapur, Bangalore and Kollegal came to Kshetra.

With the spread of the cult and the ever-increasing numbers of followers, the Kshatriyas find themselves obliged to spend a good part of the year touring among the cult-followers.<sup>1</sup> Kshatriya members have made an informal division of the cult territory into areas where different heads of families will tour among cult followers. The administrative division of this 'religious empire' bears a close resemblance to the political strategy adapted by the rulers of Vijayanagar when the empire flourished.

In former times, the Kshatriya touring party was a well-organized large group. It used to consist of an elderly Kshatriya and three or four Kshatriya youths, some of whom might be affines from Balagatti and Anegondi. The party would also include local Marathas, Kuruba Goravas, Kanchaveeras, and sometimes even Lingayat friends. Thus a party consisting of some ten to fifteen members used to camp in one place for a few days or even for several weeks.

The cult-followers provided them with supplies, and the Kshatriya youths cooked for all. When the Kshatriyas camped amidst the followers of the cult, they were always taken in a grand procession along with a number of items attached to the dignity of the office of the religious leadership. Such items included a white umbrella; riding on horseback was a prerogative of the cult leadership.

The Kshatriyas settled matters connected with the Kshetra Linga shrine and its administration. They also settled disputes in connection with the infringement of caste rules and those of the temple cult. The wrongdoers were punished with a fine and made

1. In a total of 22 adult male persons among the Kshatriyas, nearly 17 keep touring among the followers of the cult. Some ten to twelve people keep away from Kshetra for nearly 3/4 of the year, while the rest are away for half the year. They may visit as many or as few places as possible. They normally do not keep any records of their tour also. Sometimes they visit the cult followers on their request; at other times they volunteer to go on a tour. Often the economic necessities of the household decide the programme and duration of tour. They get all sorts of gifts—in addition to money—such as clothes, pots and pans, silverware and even coffee and arecanuts.

to undergo purification. In some cases they were also excommunicated.

Excommunication was from attendance at the cult centre, i.e., the Gudikattu, and not from the caste. An excommunicated person was excluded from performing ritual roles in the cult. His ties of ritual brotherhood with other followers of the cult in the area were severed. He was normally reinstated to the order upon paying a fine and undergoing purification. The entire fine might be taken by the Kshatriyas. Sometimes part of the fine was retained however, and put into the local shrine fund. In the past, people who had beaten one another with sandals were excluded by the Kshatriyas from the cult until they paid a fine and underwent purification.

Now-a-days the average Kshatriya touring party is much smaller. No villagers accompany them. The Kshatriyas themselves set off in twos and threes. But they still tour among the cult followers, settle disputes and collect ceremonial fees. When I was in the field, the trustee himself was touring in Bangalore and the surrounding areas. In one place the Untouchables had disobeyed him and violated his order against rearing chickens. The Untouchables themselves were divided over this issue. So the trustee punished the offender and made him pay his fine by selling all his chickens. The trustee also warned him not to raise chickens in future on pain of excommunication from the cult. This was described to me by a Kshatriya youth who was in the 'tour' party.

The orders and instructions issued by the Kshatriyas over a period of eighty years, from 1880-1960, deal with categories of persons living outside Kshetra. They are mostly issued to the non-Lingayats, the lower castes and to the Untouchables. That not a single Brahmin or Lingayat follower of the cult has come under Kshatriya jurisdiction and supervision is evident. There seem to be only a few cult followers from the higher castes, so that the need for supervision is reduced in their case. Hence the absence of records concerning them.

In all cases where Kshatriyas have addressed the followers of the cult, they have applied to themselves the titles 'Guru' and 'Swami'. Both titles have a religious connotation. The followers acknowledge the Kshatriyas ritual pre-eminence by addressing them by these terms. These titles probably empowered the Kshatriyas to settle cases connected with the infringement of caste rules and those of the cult. If an individual was excluded from the cult he was also discriminated against by his caste fellows. Twin-pressures—exclusion



from the cult centre and the hostility of his caste fellows—were brought to bear on an individual to compel him to pay the fine and rejoin the order.

In Kshetra itself, except for a very few conscientious Lingayats who address the Kshatriyas by their personal names, the villagers, irrespective of age, sex or status, address the Kshatriyas as '*Ajja*'. The literal meaning of this vernacular term is 'grandfather', and hence 'respectable one'. Elderly people address even teenage Kshatriya boys in this way. This mode of address clearly indicates that the Kshatriyas enjoy a kind of local religious and ritual paramountcy.

#### 8. Kshatriya Ownership of the Temple and Emphasis on Agricultural Rites

The effectiveness of the supervisory role of the Kshatriyas over those followers of the cult coming from outside Kshetra is strengthened in a number of ways. The spread of the cult becomes intelligible only in this manner. The Kshatriyas look forward to the coming of followers of the cult from outside and consider them to be important devotees.

The local and regional Veerasaivas who fought with the Kshatriyas had no basic objection in principle to the cult itself. What they objected to was the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple, their supervisory role over the followers of the cult, the large income their proprietorship of the temple entailed from the gift lands, voluntary contributions and dedication fees, and above all to the ceremonial fees they collected. The Kshatriyas do not do any manual labour. They tour among the cult-followers and collect enough ceremonial fees to enable them to maintain their families in comfort and play host to visiting officials and others.

The rivalry between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas over the temple and its resources, is intensified by basic religious differences between them. Both groups have tried to invalidate one another's claims by framing many accusations. To justify their claims, each party has fabricated elaborate legends about the founding of the temple. I have already discussed the different versions available on this point above and have argued that in fact the Kshatriyas are probably the real founders of the temple.

In spite of their rivalry and their attempts to repudiate one another's claims, the Veerasaivas and the Kshatriyas have not severed their relationship completely. At no time have the Kshatriyas closed

the temple doors against local Lingayats. Similarly the Lingayats have not boycotted the worship of the deity in the temple. This is not surprising in the light of the fact that 125 out of a total of 171 Veerasaiva households and nearly 118 out of 133 Panchachara households claim the Kshetra Linga as their family deity.

The people who fought most consistently against the Kshatriyas were indeed those Lingayat households which had the Kshetra Linga for their family deity. If the Jangam of Shivapur, the 'self-declared' rival candidate, who was supported by the Veerasaivas against the Kshatriyas, had been a permanent resident of Kshetra, the consequences of all the court cases against the Kshatriyas might well have been different. If Kshetra and Shivapur had been in the same administrative division, it is also possible that the decisions would have been different. Thus these two factors upset the calculation of the Veerasaivas, although there are other equally weighty reasons for the failure of the Veerasaivas to secure a verdict against the Kshatriyas.

The predominantly agricultural class of Panchacharas (there are 82 Panchachara households out of 93 Veerasaiva households in a total for Kshetra of 142 agricultural households), the group most active in opposing the Kshatriyas, was caught in a dilemma. Caste patriotism and loyalty to their caste spiritual teacher, the Jangam of Shivapur, alike mobilised them in opposition to the Kshatriyas, but they were unable to unite in a total boycott of the Kshetra Linga temple and its ceremonies, the reasons being that as cultivators they felt unable to dispense with the supernatural support given to agricultural activities by various ceremonies of the temple cult.

The most important ceremonies in the temple are geared to agricultural activities. As peasants, the Lingayats are committed to their observance, and their belief in the efficacy of the agricultural rites ensures their cooperation. Participation was felt to be vital for their own interests by the Lingayat cultivators. The cult was more necessary to them than was their participation to the Kshatriya family managing the temple. This partly accounts for the success of the Kshatriyas and the failure of the Veerasaivas.

By tradition, the Kshatriya leadership of the temple cult has a widespread regional significance for followers of the cult and for agriculturists in particular. If a Jangam had become the head of the temple and led its ceremonies he would have made it a centre for Veerasaiva rituals, as could be gathered from the traditions of the local Basavanna temple which constitutes an exclusively Veerasaiva religious centre. The multi-caste cult centre would have become

a caste-group oriented centre. Since all agriculturists are not Veerasaivas, there would have been a marked reduction in the number of followers. Also there would have been a change in the ritual content, as not all Veerasaivas are cultivators. The all embracing nature of the cult is consistent with Kshatriya ownership of the temple. The fact that the cult commands the allegiance of members of many castes and lays stress on agricultural rites has had much to do with the continuance of Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple. If the Janagam controlled the cult, its scope would immediately narrow and become localized.

I have already indicated how the Kshatriya supervisory role does not include that of spiritual teachers. The Kshatriyas are the ritual agents of the cult. As agents they do not stand above the cult, but participate in it. The core of participation is dramatized in following the Kshatriya tradition of bearing arms and not assuming priestly duties.

Among other duties, the Kshatriyas hold the office of 'sword bearers' in the temple, i.e., a Kshatriya is entitled to carry a sword beside the deity whenever the latter's effigy is taken out in a procession. To this extent the caste profession of fighting is retained, but on a mystical plane. Considered from this angle, intercaste participation in the temple cult, particularly at the local level, has an occupational connotation and is based on a division of labour. As owners of the cult, the Kshatriyas discharge some extra duties and enjoy certain privileges accorded them by the followers of the cult.

In short, the nature and implications of the cult have been favourable to Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple. The underlying myth and several ritual practices certainly have much in common with 'all-India or Sanskritic Hinduism'. The characteristic features of the cult, and the mode of dedication and ritual services, have a peninsular, regional and local significance.

The local and regional features are more pronounced as pilgrims from other areas come in contact with Kshetra on major festive occasions in the temple. The temple is the locus where pilgrims and villagers meet on an equal footing. Participation in the cult is ensured through the mechanism of the common feelings of anxiety and the desire for assurance shared by all participants. Agricultural rites unite all sections of the people. This overrides sectarian interests. The cult provides an unfavourable milieu for attempts by particular sects such as Veerasaivism to gain control of the temple.



The cleavage between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas is thus temporarily reduced by common participation in the cult. But the unity obtained on a mystical plane is only of short duration, for it is in contradiction to many features of secular life. Divergent economic and political interests, and many other sources of competition and tension, affect the relationship between these castes. The harmony achieved on the mystical plane may itself, by a paradox, aggravate the competition and conflict between the Kshatriyas and Veerasaivas in actual practice. An account of the conflict between these caste-groups will lead to an analysis of the role of the temple in intercaste political relationships. Politics and religion in this instance do not seem to be harmoniously interrelated. They rather appear to be separate and antithetical realms, in no way complementary to each other. The temple cult has been and still is sustained by extra local people, the celebrations remain regionally significant. Irrespective of local disputes and tensions, the temple links the village with a wider area. The presence of the temple and Kshatriya control ensures continued impact from the outside on the village economic, ritual and political life.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **TEMPLE POLITICS**

THE CHAPTER on the temple cult briefly points to the participation of people from outside Kshetra and the regional spread of the cult. The emphasis on agricultural rites brings together all agriculturists despite the caste, culture, and language barriers. Since the entire population is dependent on agricultural produce, non-agriculturists, such as shopkeepers and artisans, are also among the active followers of the cult. The multi-caste following and the Kshatriya ownership of the temple are a characteristic outcome of the nature of the cult.

Kshatriya control is supported by the followers of the cult outside Kshetra. This cult is given depth by a network of small shrines dedicated to the Kshetra Linga deity in other parts of the area. The role of the Kshatriyas in the working of these shrines is at once religious and administrative. This dual role makes their position politically important and secure. So naturally the Kshatriyas tend to rely upon the followers of the cult who come from outside as devotees.

#### **1. The followers of the Cult : The Kshatriyas and the Villagers**

The fact that the cult has a large regional following enhances the prestige of the Kshatriyas. These followers submit to Kshatriya authority in ritual matters, and accept their judgment in matters

concerning the cult. The extent of their submission is enlarged by the Kshatriyas, who carry out extensive tours in those regions where the cult has followers, seeking both to recruit new devotees and to increase their authority over old ones. They appoint the officials of local subsidiary shrines, award punishments for offences against the cult (including excommunication), reinstate repentent offenders on payment of an appropriate fine, and, above all, they collect ceremonial fees. Thus the role of the Kshatriyas as religious heads of the cult is rewarding both financially and politically, and they consciously use their ritual offices to win political power.

The village is seen as a unit by visiting pilgrims. The dichotomy between the 'visitors' and the 'villagers' is brought about by the presence of the temple. The relationship between the visitors and the villagers is neither close-knit nor sharply structured. On their way to the temple, the visitors pass through the village, but it is the temple and not the village that brings them. When the villagers and the visitors meet, it is as sellers and buyers. Since dealings are on cash terms, there is no way of developing enduring ties. The outsiders do not come into intimate contact with the villagers nor do the villagers with outsiders.

The largest gathering of pilgrims is during festive occasions, at the temple. It is of very short duration, say from an overnight stay to three or four days. Festival times are also hectic times for both villagers and outsiders. Every household in the village has its own visiting kin and affines. Festival times are of special significance when a householder invites his affines. The kinship norms emphasize this. Thus the immediate attention of the householder is focused on a small circle. The business people of the village who come in contact with visitors do so while selling things. Beyond this their interests do not involve much contact with the pilgrims.<sup>1</sup>

The pilgrims come with a set purpose, limited time, and usually very limited resources. Their purpose is to serve the deity by participating in the festival. This they do both individually and collectively as outlined in the previous chapter. The pilgrims thus inevitably come into contact with the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas often greet parties of pilgrims and offer to assist them, give them shelter and sometimes even feed them. Finally they take them into the temple and worship the deity on their behalf. Naturally

1. In this Chapter use 'followers of the cult', 'devotees', 'pilgrims', 'visitors' and 'outsiders' synonymously (although they might overlap) insofar as they are different from the villagers.



the pilgrims are expected to acknowledge all this and reward the Kshatriyas suitably.

Pilgrims also visit Kshetra throughout the year, and not only at festival times, in large and small groups. At such times they camp in the temple premises, or of late, in the Rest House. Depending on the caste and social status of the pilgrims, the Kshatriyas provide them with temple pots and pans for cooking and a servant to help them. The servant supplies water, firewood and hot water for bathing, and assists them in purchasing grocery, milk and milk products locally. Several such parties visited Kshetra while I was in the field.

The largest party was one of Lingayat pilgrims which came to Kshetra during September 1960. It consisted of some 50 to 60 people, from a distant place—Jagalur in Chitradurga district. The party was housed in the Rest House, where Kshatriya youths looked after them. The rich pilgrims had hired a bus which could not reach Kshetra owing to heavy rains and the poor state of the mud roads. They had come all the way for the first haircut of a boy. The religious ceremony was elaborate and showy. But all the same, it affirmed the Kshatriya belief in their own high status and the importance of the temple. Occasions like these reaffirm the relationship and common interest between the cult followers and the Kshatriyas.

These parties are of no interest to the villagers. They consider them 'as those of the temple and the Kshatriyas'. Since the villagers do not interact much with the outsiders, the pilgrims also consider themselves 'as those of the temple and the Kshatriyas', although the Kshatriyas and the pilgrims cannot be said to form a block opposed to the villagers. Yet it has made the Kshatriyas more friendly with the outsiders than with the villagers. The temple is a source of unity but it is a powerful divisive force too. The unity attained by the village by the participation of all the villagers in festivals is short lived. The juridical tie between the villagers and the Kshatriyas is not the same as that between the Kshatriyas and the followers of the cult.

## 2. Kshatriyas, Lingayats and other local Castes in the Temple Premises

An overwhelming majority of the Veerasaivas, have little in common with the Kshatriyas, although they worship the Kshetra Linga deity and claim it as their family deity. Divergent religious ideologies and economic interests come in the way of enduring friendships. The temple cult has helped the Kshatriyas to assert and

maintain their superior status as members of the Twice-born castes. It has also led to political relationships of superordination and subordination between the Kshatriyas and the cult followers wherever the latter happen to be of non-Lingayat and other lower castes. But where higher castes or castes of equal status are involved, the Kshatriyas wield little or no power, although they may often be votaries and followers of the cult. I have already pointed out that Kshatriya orders to followers of the cult over the past eighty years do not show a single instance involving higher castes, locally or otherwise.

A sense of equality of caste status between the Veerasaivas and the Twice-born, supported by different ideologies, widen the cleavage between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats of Kshetra. It is not through 'Sanskritization' that the Veerasaivas are competing with the Twice-born and claiming equal status. In this context vegetarianism and teetotalism are not reliable criteria of 'sanskritization'. The chapter on Lingayat sectarianism has thrown light on the ritual content of the Veerasaiva religion. Veerasaivism is not only different from orthodox Hinduism but has sometimes been described as a heterodox rebellious sect. Hence it is opposed to Brahmanical Hinduism and is characterized by anti-Sanskritic tendencies both in precept and practice.

The Veerasaivas of Kshetra put themselves in opposition to the Kshatriyas ideologically as they belong to different caste groups. This is, however, not concerned with the status of these two castes in the caste hierarchy since the Veerasaivas claim equality with the Twice-born castes. The hostility between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas is enhanced by their living and working together. The power and prestige enjoyed by the Kshatriyas as owners of the temple opened the eyes of the Lingayats. They looked at it from the secular viewpoint. The enormous economic reward the Kshatriyas derived from heading the temple and supervising the followers of the cult aroused their envy. Though they have been described as heterodox, the Veerasaivas sought evidence from Vedic scriptures to point out that Kshatriyas cannot be spiritual teachers or heads of religious organizations.

In the introductory chapter, I have pointed out that the general sources of conflict between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas seem to have lain in their primary economic relationship as tax-collectors and tax-payers.

With the advent of British rule and land reforms, the Government deprived the Kshatriyas of their political power and economic resources. This must have led to a steady rise in the power of the



local Lingayats.

The political and economic loss sustained locally by the Kshatriyas was made good by them outside the village, when the followers of cult willingly submitted to Kshatriya religious and political authority and rewarded them economically. If the nature of the cult, i.e., the emphasis on agricultural rites, partly accounts for the regional spread of the cult, the Kshatriyas' loss of local political power and economic resources and consequent leadership over the followers of the cult outside Kshetra could be taken to have provided a strong incentive for the spread of the cult.

Within the village, the cult did not lead the Kshatriyas to assume religious leadership over the Lingayats. The ritual roles in the temple were distributed among a number of local castes. Fulfilment of these duties was economically rewarding, in that they (i.e., members of local castes) had the use of temple lands, although the Kshatriyas had the lion's share. Interdependence of castes was essential for the smooth administration of temple affairs. Division of ritual roles and administration of economic resources reduced the Kshatriyas to accept other high castes such as the Veerasaivas on an equal footing with them at least in theory. This meant loss of political power. In short the loss in secular status determined the scope and importance of Kshatriya leadership of the cult locally.

From the beginning, Kshatriyas seem to have accepted the ritual superiority of Brahmins, for, throughout the history of the temple, Brahmins have been priests, carrying out routine forms of worship. The ritual superiority accorded to Brahmins is congruent with scriptural injunctions, as also is the fact that the Kshatriyas undertake religious observances under the guidance of an officiating Brahmin. With the spread of the cult in the region, the Kshatriyas as owners of the temple, assumed a religious role of some importance over the followers of the cult. This enabled them to derive some economic benefits and acquire new political power. Thus the religious sway acquired through the cult enhanced their secular status elsewhere. But locally it was the other way round.

The numerical preponderance of the Lingayats, whose faith was opposed to that of the Twice-born was a hidden threat to Kshatriya ownership of the temple and leadership of the followers of the cult. This overt antagonism could be overcome by a network of intercaste relationships within the village and in relation to the offices and properties of the temple. Ritual roles in the temple were endowed with lands. And interest in the lands would naturally prompt



cooperation between the owners of the temple and those serving there, although it might also lead to conflict. However, in the past many Lingayat families were absorbed into the temple bureaucracy. Distribution of work in the temple, to some extent emphasized the traditional occupational specialization of castes, so that it meant a division of labour between different castes. For example, the temple had a Brahmin priest for routine worship, the Kshatriyas held the office of 'sword bearers' to the deity, and the local Panchachara Lingayats were of major importance in the temple bureaucracy.

The Lingayats swept the floors and whitewashed the inner shrine of the temple, and lit lamps in the evening. The ritual roles performed by the Lingayats included being in charge of dummy horses, which they handled on ceremonial occasions, yet other Lingayats played on the *tambura*, a classical musical instrument. Some Lingayat families were in charge of distributing water to pilgrims during festive occasions in the temple. Still others were in charge of locking the temple. Together their services were called '*Deeparadhane*' (i.e., lamp-lighting and worshipping), and they themselves were known as '*Panchama Pujaris*' (five priests). Many titles of Panchachara Lingayats in Kshetra today still describe the nature of the work they used to do in the temple. For instance, there are Lingayat *Odeyar*, *Honnukudure*, *Tamburi*, *Arevantige* and *Anjala* families which used to break coconuts, handle dummy horses, play on the musical instruments, distribute water and lock the temple in the past.

Besides the higher castes, the non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes also served in the temple. Most of them enjoyed the use of temple lands. This temple together with some minor temples which came under its jurisdiction, has nearly 662 acres of land. In the past this land was parcelled out to all those who served in the temple. The distribution of temple land to those who served in the temple is laid out in the following table. (Table 4).

Although the local non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes held ritual posts and discharged their duties in the temple, they accepted the superior status of the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas were superior to them because of caste status, ownership of the temple, bestowing of emblems and leadership of the cult. The degree of isolation between the 'superior' and the 'inferior' castes involved in temple service was marked by the maintenance of physical distance. Members of non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes did not have a place inside the temple. The ritual roles that these castes played kept them spatially distant from the higher castes.

TABLE 4

**Kshetra Lingaswamy Temple Land Division (Temple Record, 1929)**

<i>Office</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Acres-Cents</i>
1. Temple Priest	Brahmin	... 93-53
2. Sword Bearer	Kshatriya	... 171-91
3. Panchama Pujari	Lingayat Panchacharas	... 169-51
4. Water Supplier	" "	... 24-19
5. Cleaner	" "	... 28-98
6. Sweeper	" "	... 9-54
7. Flower Supplier	Kuruba	... 9-65
8. Mardi Priest	"	... 42-35
9. Peon	"	... 4-89
10. Palanquin Bearer	Barike	... 33-62
11. Miracle Play	Kanchaveera	... 17-87
Total		... 606-04
Total land of the Kshetra Linga temple		...
including four minor deities		... 662-26
Total land held by service castes		... 606-04
Balance		... 56-22

*Notes :* The temple records do not say anything about the balance of land but according to oral information this land was distributed between Maratha miracle players and Cheluvadi pipers.

Five ritual posts were held by the Kurubas : foreteller (*Karnika*), silver-cane holder (*Maldar*), flower supplier (*Hugar*), custodian of the tobacco pipe (*Jejjuri*), and priest of the *Mardi*, who also plays on big drums (*nagari*). None of these roles involved the Kurubas entering the shrine or handling the deity.

The Marathas were military men (*dalavay*), and undertook the ritual duty of breaking the iron chain before the deity. A Setti Banajiga family waved the ceremonial lamp (*Mangalarthi*) before the deity. Barikes were palanquin bearers. None of these duties gave any grounds for their performers to challenge the authority of the Kshatriyas. Their ritual roles, on the contrary, emphasized their subordination to the Kshatriyas.

All the three Untouchable castes served in the temple. The Cheluvadis supplied pipe music, the Kanchaveeras undertook the 'miracle plays' of shedding human blood, while the Madigas were in charge of the sandals of the deity and occasionally beat drums.

The Brahmin conducted daily worship, morning and evening. He was also present on festival occasions when additional services were required of him. The temple priest seldom officiates for pilgrims or votaries. Ceremonial gifts do not go to him and he enjoys temple land for his services. He does not live in the temple premises. The Kshatriyas who now live in the temple compound sometimes officiate for devotees and receive ceremonial fees. This seems to have been the case even when they were not living in the temple compound.

As outlined earlier, the Lingayats held many positions of a secular and ritual nature in the temple. Their secular services consisted in opening the temple doors, sweeping the floor and lighting the lamps in the temple in the evening. This daily routine necessitated their constant presence in the temple, from morning till evening. This was in contrast to that of the Brahmin priest who came to the temple at appointed times for daily worship and the Kshatriyas who occasionally officiated for devotees. Often the Lingayat who was in the temple premises officiated for devotees, when the latter were in a hurry, or when the Kshatriyas were not at hand. Indeed, the Kshatriyas kept themselves busy touring among followers of the cult during most of the year.

The Lingayats who served in the temple also officiated for casual devotees and were recipients of small ceremonial gifts. They were all-in-all inside the temple and even today one Lingayat family lights the lamps, while three other families are in charge of minor temples. Families in charge of minor temples worship the deities and officiate for people who visit the temples. Even now, during festival occasions, when there are crowds of pilgrims in the main temple, it is the Lingayats who break coconuts and offer other things to the deity on behalf of the pilgrims. The Brahmin priest does not undertake to do this, while the Kshatriyas do not do it on a large scale.

All these privileges and duties put together made the position of the Lingayat temple servants very important. The daily routine work, such as sweeping the temple floor, lighting the lamps, and looking the temple doors necessitated Lingayat presence in the temple. They were in charge of the key to the shrine. Neither the Brahmin priest, nor the Kshatriyas came to the temple until the Lingayats opened it and swept the floor. The importance of the Lingayat position in temple administration was enhanced by some ritual roles, such as playing on musical instruments and handling dummy horses in the temple on certain occasions. The varied services rendered by



the Lingayats in the temple involved quite a few families in the village.

It is clear that from the beginning the Lingayats have occupied an important place in the Kshatriya-controlled temple. The smooth working of the temple was only rendered possible by intercaste co-operation. The role of each caste in the temple meant a division of labour, in a way which emphasized traditional occupations. Yet by virtue of their high caste status, which is claimed to be equal to that of the Brahmins, the Lingayats were able to hold many important posts in the temple. Their position in the hierarchy of the temple offices kept them well informed about the management of temple affairs.

It was a knowledge of the working of temple affairs which ultimately enabled the Lingayat servants of the temple to support the rival claims put forward by the Veerasaivas as regards the ownership of the temple. To begin with it was not the Lingayat temple servants who initiated proceedings but a few local Lingayats whose antagonism against the Kshatriyas was exacerbated by favourable external Veerasaiva parties. Hence the series of lawsuits filed by the Veerasaivas against the Kshatriyas. Economic interests can bring people together as well as keep them divided. So individual Lingayats chose to support or oppose the Kshatriyas according to expediency and their immediate interests. A study of the various lawsuits will reveal this, and I will now outline them briefly.

### 3. The External and Internal Sources of Conflict & Cooperation

Throughout the 20th century, the Kshatriyas proprietorship of the temple has been envied by some local Panchachara Lingayats. They have been constantly on the watch for an opportunity to express their antagonism against the Kshatriyas. In this endeavour they did not hesitate to jeopardise the unity of the village, i.e., they found it easy to align themselves with Veerasaivas in the neighbouring villages who were bent upon harming the Kshatriyas. In their antagonism to the Kshatriyas, Lingayats residing in Kshetra found it expedient to be loyal to their caste. They willingly supported the Lingayats of the neighbouring villages against the Kshatriyas of Kshetra. Loyalty to the village was undermined by extra-village caste loyalties.<sup>1</sup> Now the Kshatriya-Lingayat relationship is more the local expression of a regional dispute than merely a local dispute.

1. Epstein, T.S. 1962, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 183-8, records similar case of caste affiliation in connection with the Untouchable drama incidents.

The dispute first arose over the economic resources of the temple. The Lingayats always alleged that the Kshatriyas were misappropriating temple funds. On this plea they wanted a change in temple proprietorship. With this view they quoted the sacred texts to show that Kshatriyas could not be spiritual teachers and heads of religious organizations. Finally they declared Kshetra to be a place of pilgrimage for Veerasaivas, since the deity in the temple is one of the incarnations of Shiva.

The Veerasaivas accused the Kshatriyas of having wrongfully assumed the proprietorship of the temple and of having deceived the real overlords, the Jangams of Shivapur in Dharwar district. They pointed to the office of the 'sword bearer' held by the Kshatriyas and declared that the position of the Kshatriyas is not a whit better than that of other temple servants, especially the Lingayats. They alleged that the Kshatriyas took to temple service under the Jangams of Shivapur,<sup>1</sup> but then threw off their control in course of time: To strengthen this argument the Veerasaivas in general, and the Jangams in particular, put forward a different version of the founding of the temple and the story connected with it.

The Kshatriyas said that the temple was their private property, founded by one of their ancestors in the remote past. On this score they argued that they were accountable to none, and hence were under no necessity to keep accounts. They pointed out that the Veerasaivas were heretics, whereas the ceremonies in the temple were carried on in accordance with Sanskrit Hinduism. As a result the Veerasaivas were excluded from access to the innermost shrine where the deity was housed.

The Kshatriyas further pointed out that an orthodox Veerasaiva should not worship any image or deity other than his own 'personal lingam' worn on his body. The temple was a multi-case centre and the Kshatriyas as founders and leaders of the cult, administered to the customs and traditions of the followers of the cult. They alleged that it was the less orthodox of the Veerasaivas, who were ignorant of the nature of their own religion who had become the followers of the cult and that the Kshatriyas were not concerned with Veerasaivas religious needs alone.

The administrators—the officials of the Government and of the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, who came to arbitrate over these

1. See Map 3 for the position of Shivapur.

disputes—in a way curtailed the power of the Kshatriyas. But they also legitimized the Kshatriya right to temple proprietorship and recognized some of the prerogatives and privileges of the Kshatriyas as leaders of the cult.

The failure of the Lingayats to achieve their aim had a direct effect on the position of the Kshatriya locally and in some special ceremonies of the temple. The village became a lesser social reality and the Kshatriyas began to look to the wider system,<sup>1</sup> and to consider the followers of the cult as close to them. The Kshatriya aloofness from the village's social life in the present century is a product of Lingayat antagonism. Hence, the Kshatriyas, while in the village, spent most of their time in the temple compound.

There were no serious threats to the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple and religious leadership of the followers of the cult until 1910. The Government recognized the temple lands as such (inam lands), in 1861. A temple committee with eight members was constituted at the taluk headquarters—Hadagalli—in 1863. Theoretically the temple was subject to the inspection of any of the committee members. In 1878, this temple was also listed under the Hindu Religious Institutions in Harapanahalli division.

In 1885, one Mr. N. Bhat, a Brahmin and the only surviving member of the eight members of the temple committee, wrote to the Tahsildar—the revenue officer—at Hadagalli that a few Lingayat agriculturists of Kshetra, among them a N. Gowda and others, had petitioned him about the mismanagement of the temple and misappropriation of temple funds by the Kshatriyas. The member stated that he had inspected the temple once around 1867 but the Kshatriyas did not allow him to do so in 1885.

N. Bhat admitted that he did not know about the resources and jewellery of the temple but stated that the ancestors of the Kshatriyas probably received them as gifts and handed them down to successive generations. He declared that the Kshatriyas have been proprietors of the temple for a long time, but stated that he was reporting against the Kshatriyas on the basis of a petition sent to him by the Lingayats of Kshetra.

The matter subsided for a time. But the Kshatriyas have made use of N. Bhat's statement, that "Kshatriyas were proprietors of the temple for a long time", in most court cases when the Lingayats

1. The temple cult had acquired a commercial value and for different reasons the position of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra is comparable to Ganjam distillers in Bisipara. Cf. Bailey, 1957.



tried to deprive them of what they considered to be their rights. At the same time, the Kshatriyas argued that the temple was their private property and hence the temple committee or other Government institutions had no authority to inspect or audit the temple accounts. They declared that the temple committee had never exercised authority over them.

During the middle of the 19th century, i.e., from 1843 to 1853 the Kshatriyas also fought a court case against one Jyoti Lingaiah of Bangalore district. Jyoti Lingaiah had borrowed retinue such as Goravas and Dalavays from the then Kshatriya trustee who was touring the district. According to the Kshatriyas, Jyoti Lingaiah was a Kuruba, who probably embraced Veerasaivism, but was a follower of the Kshetra Linga cult. The retinue lent to him was to assist him in the ceremony of opening a new house. Meanwhile the Kshatriya trustee received an urgent call to return to Kshetra. Thinking that the retinue would return home after the ceremony he hurried to Kshetra. It was not until he received information from some followers of the cult in Kollegal that he learned that the retinue had been put to wrong use by Jyoti Lingaiah.

It is said that Jyoti Lingaiah first went round the district with the retinue, collecting dues from the followers of the cult on behalf of the Kshatriyas. But when he strayed further away into Kollegal he began to claim allegiance from cult followers and declared himself a guru. It had just happened that the Kshatriya trustee of Kshetra had toured the area about four months prior to this. Generally Kshatriya toured among the followers of the cult once in four or five years. The frequency of the visits filled the followers with suspicion. So they detained Jyoti Lingaiah and sent word to Kshetra. Then the Kshetra Kshatriyas petitioned to the Government. The Government order confirmed the Kshatriya prerogative over the retinue and the temple and made Jyoti Lingaiah return the retinue to the Kshatriyas. When the Kshatriyas filed a suit to claim damages, the court overruled it on some technical ground such as the value of the objects involved.

The Kshatriya failure to claim damages was later on exploited by the opposition party, namely, the Jangams of Shivapur. Accordingly, the Jangams declared Jyoti Lingaiah to be a Lingayat disciple of Shivapur Mutt. He is said (by the Jangams) to have obstructed the Kshatriyas when the latter tried to misappropriate the position of the Jangams as proprietors of the temple.

The Kshatriyas are said to have declared themselves as gurus

among the followers of the cult in place of the Jangams of Shivapur. According to this version, the Kshatriyas took to service under the Jangams as caretakers (*Parupatyagars*) of the temple, but later proclaimed themselves proprietors of the temple as against the Jangams. Why the Jangams did not take sufficient precautions against the growing power of the Kshatriyas until the early 20th century is a mystery, and throws doubt on the reliability of this version.

#### 4. The Sugar Case (1911-14)<sup>1</sup>

The next dispute of importance leading to court litigation came about 1910. It was a Lingayat Banajiga of Guruvathi, one C. Chokki, in collaboration with four local Panchachara Lingayats,<sup>2</sup> who brought it to the notice of the Government, and actually sent a petition stating that the local temple had a large income from temple lands (Rs. 5,000/-) and festival collections (Rs. 5,000/-). Besides, it was alleged, the Kshatriyas collected gifts of money, jewellery and so forth from the followers of the cult, and also collected large sums (about Rs. 20,000/-) from the people on the grounds of extending the temple building. They alleged that all the money and jewellery were being put to personal use by the Kshatriyas. The cause of the dispute was personal disagreement between the then Kshatriya elder V. Dharmakarta and C. Chokki.

Here I must say something about the sources of information available to me about court litigations over the temple, and specifically in this case. 'Sources of information' are limited to 'select' court records placed at my disposal by the Kshatriyas. Some oral information from informants, local as well as in the neighbourhood, came from others besides the Kshatriyas and the contending parties. The oral information given by the Kshatriyas and other contending parties was naturally not impartial.

The contending Lingayat parties were reticent to begin with. Since Lingayats have lost in most court litigations, they were less willing to discuss past events and much less the cause of dispute. They used to tell me, "Court records abound, but what is the use of going back to them? They are not one or two to sort out. Kshatriyas are all just terrible. They were like minor chiefs (*Poleyagars*) during the 19th and early 20th century. Only recently have they become less arrogant." The scope of my account of the various cases is limited in a sense, although I was able to gather

1. See p. 172-173 for the significance of the title.

2. See chart 3 below.

**CHART 3**  
**A Guide to Characters in the Sugarcase (1911-14)**

Plaintiffs : Name	Caste	Residence	Remarks	Adjudicators :	Defendants : Name	Caste	Residence	Remarks
1. C. Chokki	Lingayat Banajiga	Elsewhere	Businessman	The Government	1. V. Dharma- karta	Kshatriya	Kshetra	1. Proprietor of the temple and leader of the cult.
2. N. Gowda	Lingayat Pancha- chara	Kshetra	Agriculturist		2. C. Chalkatti	L. Pan- chachara	"	2. Poor man-ser- vant.
3. H. Siddalin- ganna	"	"	"	Recognised the Kshatriya right to the temple, but was not pre- pared to grant that it was pri- vate property of the Kshatriyas.	3. B. Kadale— X	"	"	3. Immigrant businessman & agriculturist family, a money-lender.
4. B. Neela- kanta Gowda or K. Chanda- pura	"	"	"		4. N. Ulli & brother—X	"	"	4. Agriculturists.
5. S. Panchama D. Panchanna C. Panchanna	"	"	Agriculturist, businessman, took keen interest in legal matters.		5. C. Metigudi	Jangam	Elsewhere	5. Businessman and trader in stocks (School teacher).
X—Parties helping the Kshatriya cause covertly.								



details of information from different sources. Self-appraisal and willingness to contradict one another's statements marked both the parties ; the Kshatriyas as well as the Lingayats. This will become clear as I discuss the various episodes connected with the temple.

One of my Kshatriya informants explained to me that the 1911-14 court litigations, herein after called the 'The Sugar Case', started between his family and others. This occurred as follows. The Guruvathi Banajiga family was friendly with the Kshetra Kshatriyas. The two families were on such good terms that the children always had plenty of sweets from the Banajiga who was a shopkeeper. My informant further added, that as a young boy, he was very much attached to his father's Banajiga friend, for the latter always came with his coat pockets full of sweets and gave them to him.

The plague and cholera that raged in early 1910's had decimated the Banajiga family. Around 1907-8, C. Chokki approached V. Dharmakarta, and asked him if he could help him find some sarvant who could assist in the household work and other general work. Accordingly one C. Chalkatti, a poor Lingayat Panchachara man of Kshetra, was sent to serve in C. Chokki's family. He served them loyally for three or four years. The Banajiga family became quite prosperous and their business revived. C. Chalkatti wanted to return to Kshetra to set up his family and settle down. C. Chokki had not given him any remuneration so far. Thus C. Chalkatti asked his master for some money, only to be rebuked, upon which C. Chalkatti quietly returned to Kshetra,

After a couple of days, C. Chokki came to Kshetra and called on his Kshatriya friend. He complained to V. Dharmakarta about the unmannerliness of C. Chalkatti. Upon this, V. Dharmakarta made C. Chalkatti appear personally, and he told him what had happened. Now V. Dharmakarta persuaded C. Chokki to pay C. Chalkatti on the ground that he had helped them in times of trouble. He pleaded that "it would be meritorious if the prosperous family of C. Chokki helped C. Chalkatti to set up his family and settle down". C. Chokki was furious because V. Dharmakarta sided with the servant instead of snubbing him. He picked up a quarrel and challenged them. He swore that he would see how the Kshatriya Guru and the Lingayat follower—V. Dharmakarta and C. Chalkatti—would thrive.

It is necessary to treat the above account with some caution. It is possible that the Kshatriyas might have been indebted to C. Chokki and obliged him by lending C. Chalkatti's services. Friend-

ship and indebtedness have always characterized the Kshatriya families and these have frequently landed them in trouble and resulted in bitter antagonism. This will emerge quite clearly from the series of court litigations referred to in another connection.

I must also point out at this stage that when cases were taken to court, the parties never gave the real causes of the dispute. There was always a deviation from the real situation, a shift in emphasis. But what is important in the above issue is that the dispute was essentially between two Lingayats. V. Dharmakarta, who acted as a mediator in the beginning and end of the deal, now became the object of attack.

When the dispute was taken to the court C. Chalkatti supported V. Dharmakarta indeed. The real cause of the dispute was never brought before the court. However, four local Panchachara Lingayats, N. Gowda, H. Siddalinganna, B. Neelakanta Gowda or K. Chandrapura (records from both parties give different names), and S. Panchanna, supported C. Chokki against the Kshatriyas.

It is difficult to analyse their action. In all probability they remained—especially the last two and the first—definitely outside the temple service and had no temple lands. In fact, N. Gowda was the person who had complained against the Kshatriyas as early as 1885. He was probably waiting for an opportunity to oppose the Kshatriyas, and now he found fellow Lingayats joining hands with him in this enterprise.

They as the first group of Lingayats from Kshetra took the initiative in openly contesting and challenging the Kshatriya claim to the temple. Although they could not succeed in this, the petitioners were successful in a sense. They now drew the attention of the Government to the affairs of the temple and kept the Kshatriyas quite busy finding ways of defending their position and retaining their prerogatives in connection with the temple. The petitioners charged the Kshatriyas with misappropriation of a lot of 'public money' and failure to keep accounts. They suggested that since the Kshatriyas had failed to maintain and submit accounts to the Government and other responsible persons interested in the temple, they should no longer be in control of the temple.

V. Dharmakarta pleaded that the temple was founded by his ancestors, and was consequently their private property. Therefore he was accountable to none. However, the district court was not prepared to grant that the temple was a private property. Right from the start, V. Dharmakarta declared that the petitioners were his



“hereditary enemies” who simply wanted to harass him. The case was awaiting a final decision, when the petitioners, I was told by many Lingayat informants, were sure of success. Suddenly S. Panchanna was murdered. This drastic step suggests that he was probably a threat to the Kshatriya position.

The court records do not mention whether the Jangams of Shivapur—Phalaksha Dharmakarta and his brothers—were backing the petitioners at this stage. But the oral information I gathered from other informants and S. Panchanna’s family implied that S. Panchanna’s evidence in the final ‘hearing’ would have ousted the Kshatriyas and brought in the Jangams. This interpretation is further supported by D. Panchanna’s statement. D. Panchanna was born in the same year as his father S. Panchanna was murdered. The Shivapur Jangams’ family helped him to get further education and secured a teaching post for him. D. Panchanna told me that the late A. Dharmakarta, brother of Phalaksha Dharmakarta, had helped him out of a sense of obligation, admitting that S. Panchanna was murdered for their sake.

In the early part of 1914, before his murder, S. Panchanna was suing the Kshatriyas and their Panchachara Lingayat friend, a local magnate, B. Kadale, for having maltreated him at the time of the annual festival. The dispute was originally between S. Panchanna, who was collecting tolls, and the Brahmin pilgrims. The Kshatriyas protested against S. Panchanna and his party when the Brahmin pilgrims were maltreated. This S. Panchanna denied and filed a suit against them. The court declared that this was the result of already existing enmity between the parties, dismissed the case and made S. Panchanna pay the total costs. Soon after this S. Panchanna was murdered while on his way to give evidence at the Bellary court.

It was in a desolate area near Sajjigere about seventeen miles from Kshetra that S. Panchanna was murdered by one of his own Jangam friends, C.E. Gudi, and his party. All informants are unanimous about this. While most Lingayat informants assert that C.E. Gudi and his party were hired by V. Dharmakarta and B. Kadale, my Kshatriya informant declared that this was false. I was told that V. Dharmakarta was “too noble a soul to indulge in this kind of sinful act”. People were all too ready to jump to any false conclusion as there was antagonism between them. S. Panchanna was a debauchee and had an affair with a woman of C.E. Gudi’s family. So the latter took revenge. It is true that V. Dharmakarta helped C.E. Gudi when he sought refuge after the murder.



With no records put at my disposal, I would have found it hard to decide between the oral statements of the Kshatriyas and the Lingayat informants. Thanks to A. Ulli, a Panchachara Lingayat and a veteran supporter of the Kshatriyas, who declared himself an eternal enemy of S. Panchanna's family, I was placed in a better position. After dictating his genealogy, when I questioned A. Ulli as to how he lost all his property, he narrated the story which is given below.

The property came to A. Ulli from his mother's brothers. They and B. Kadale were staunch supporters of the Kshatriyas. When S. Panchanna was proving dangerous to Kshatriya 'survival', A. Ulli's maternal uncles and their party conspired to bring about his murder. S. Panchanna's party gathered the bones and filed a criminal case against the Kshatriyas. The bones were declared to be human bones by the lower court, upon which the Kshatriyas appealed to the Madras High Court. They bribed the doctor to report that the bones were those of a donkey.

I was able to gather at length that although S. Panchanna had mistresses in several places, he could not possibly have meddled with C.E. Gudi's family. The village Gudi was off the beaten track of S. Panchanna who was always in the taluk and district headquarters or other bigger places such as Hospet, taking a keen interest in legal affairs.

Furthermore, C.E. Gudi as a Jangam stood in the place of guru and spiritual father to S. Panchanna, and it is morally wrong to offend one's guru. The situation was summed up for me by D. Panchanna as follows: "C.E. Gudi was a very ambitious man capable of doing anything for the sake of money. During the 1930's, C.E. Gudi is said to have murdered his own brother's wife, and brought a suit against the Marwari moneylender of Hadagalli". Many Lingayat informants expressed the view that serious crimes such as murder, arson, loot and so forth never took place without the help of a Jangam.

All my Lingayat informants, however, were agreed that C.E. Gudi and his party were given a bribe of Rs. 3,000/- or so when they presented the severed head of the murdered man as a sign of their successful action. It is believed that the head was buried at the door step of a former joint family household where the Kshatriyas lived and which has now become the Mutt of the Shivapur Jangam. The lack of easy means of communication in the early 20th century was advanced as one of the reasons why the Lingayats did not at

once consider the possibility that S. Panchanna had been murdered and then take speedy action. S. Panchanna who had promised to come back soon did not return to Kshetra for some days.

The villagers of Kshetra were camping outside the village because of an outbreak of plague in the village. Meanwhile, the Kshatriyas distributed sugar in the village, to indicate that they had won the case. This made S. Panchanna's family and party uneasy. Then they started searching for him. One M.B., a Panchachara Lingayat informant, who of late has fallen out with the Kshatriya President, but otherwise has always supported the Kshatriyas in most court litigations, told me that he could still remember having received and eaten the sugar distributed by the Kshatriyas. He was young, and sugar was rarely given to children in those days. Later he used to listen to the ailing old mother of S. Panchanna's who complained that her son had been murdered by Kshatriya enemies.

The allegation that the severed head was buried at the doorstep became current knowledge only after the lapse of a decade or so. Although I cannot vouch for the objective truth of these statements, the circumstances related above make the evidence for murder seem plausible enough. If V. Dharmakarta and party had entered into a contract with C.E. Gudi, it would have been possible that they stipulated that proof of S. Panchanna's death should be given since they were paying a heavy sum.

The fact that the Jangam was a friend of S. Panchanna might have prompted C.E. Gudi to tell a lie and abscond with the money. To bring the severed head as a token would have been a guarantee. Once the head was in their hands, of course, they would have had to bury it. Since the villagers had deserted the houses, and were camping outside the village, they probably found the joint family house surrounded by high compound walls the safest place to bury the head without fear of being seen by others. It would also have been appropriate to bury the head under the doorstep, for this would have indicated that at last they had triumphed over their enemy, for they would be treading on his head daily.

Ignoring the above details, this much is clear. In the struggle between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats for possession of the temple, at the very start of the affair an important witness in the Lingayat party was made away with, or at least disappeared mysteriously, and the Lingayats lost their case. Moreover the appeal to the Government merely served to provide a legal basis for

Kshatriya dominance, since they were recognized as the rightful proprietors of the temple. However, this decision was not accepted by the Lingayat party as final, and further litigation ensued. The participation and role of outside agents in this case was crucial at all stages.

From the very beginning the Lingayats were divided amongst themselves. With the exception of the local Panchacharas, the other Lingayat sub-castes did not protest against the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple. Indeed they were on the side of the Kshatriyas.<sup>1</sup> Even among the Panchacharas it was only some who were bent upon opposing the Kshatriyas, while others helped the Kshatriyas against members of their own sub-caste.

The nature of the evidence clearly points to the fact that the Lingayats were keener on bringing about the murder of S. Panchanna than the Kshatriyas themselves. To achieve this, they enlisted the cooperation of an exalted order among the Veerasaivas, namely the Jangams, and that too of an outsider. The Kshatriya cause provided the best means to carry this out.

The Shivapur Jangam is not the family spiritual teacher of B. Kadale, and N. Ulli (maternal uncle of A. Ulli). Nor do other sub-castes have the Shivapur Jangam for their family spiritual teacher. The four local Panchachara men who opposed the Kshatriyas are of course the disciples of the Shivapur Jangam. But C. Chalkatti, who supported the Kshatriyas, was also a disciple of the Shivapur Jangam and so is M.B. and his family.

In the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism, I have already pointed out how the role of the Jangams as family and personal spiritual teachers is of only marginal importance, in that they do not wield effective sanctions. This weakness in the position, authority, and role of the Jangams give the Lingayats a fair degree of latitude, so that they can undertake to do things which may virtually undermine the structural unity of their organization.

There is not a single source of authority to which all Lingayats might appeal if the need arose. Some fifteen heads of Mutts whom the Panchachara Lingayats recognise as family spiritual teachers of their families are scattered all over Bellary, Dharwar and in some cases even Chitradurga districts. The Mutts themselves are divided against one another, or at least no Mutt has much in common with

1. Lingayat divisions seem analogous at this stage of the dispute to the division among the Untouchables of Bisipara, with pro-warrior and anti-warrior factions. Cf. Bailey, 1957.



another. In many cases they also compete for power by backing up their respective disciples. That the Mutts compete for power is evident from the Shivagiri and Durgapatna centres, which also provide spiritual teachers for different sub-castes, in this case the Sadarus and the Panchacharas.

The large size of the Veerasaiva community (in relation to the total population of the village) and particularly of the Panchachara sub-caste in Kshetra, might itself be regarded as a sufficient reason for its disunity. This is further supplemented by the ambitious struggles of individuals for power and resources. People who supported one contestant against another did so for either of these, and in some cases for both reasons. B. Kadale who supported the Kshatriyas against the Lingayats in due course built up a large fortune and became very powerful in the village. Thus internal disharmony among the local Lingayats might be considered to be a source of strength for the Kshatriyas in maintaining their position, and secures their interests in all court litigations.

My Kshatriya informants summed up the matter as follows : "Supernatural retribution befell C. Chokki's family". The family-owned flour mill was burnt. C. Chokki himself was thrown out of the joint family household. C. Chokki's son killed his wife and was involved in a criminal case. The family sustained a loss of nearly Rs. 25,000/-. "God punished the wicked man". My Kshatriya informant interpreted the misfortune of his own family in a different way.

The Kshatriya family did not prosper between 1915 and 1925 although it had B. Kadale's support. By now the financial resources of the Kshatriyas were exhausted and the family had to give up agricultural operations. They sold their equipment to B. Kadale and others around 1916-17. However, they had also mortgaged the 'sword bearers' land to three people of Kshetra, a Panchala and two Panchachara Lingayats, one of them B. Kadale himself. In addition the Kshatriyas had some thirty to forty creditors scattered over the district, in such places as Harapanahalli, Hadagalli, Kolalu and Guruvathi.

B. Kadale now entered into an agreement with V. Dharmakarta, so that the 'sword-bearers' land which was divided between three tenants was allotted to B. Kadale. When this was effected, creditors outside Kshetra hastened to sue the Kshatriyas. Accordingly, the Kshatriyas were declared insolvent by the district court in 1922, and a warrant was brought against the Kshatriya family.

The Kshatriyas sold some of their land in Chikkaguruvathi in Dharwar district, and some of their own land and the joint family building in Kshetra to B. Kadale and his party. B. Kadale bought them at a public auction around 1925, but allowed the Kshatriyas to live in the house until much later. The money thus released enabled the Kshatriyas to repay their creditors outside Kshetra at the rate of four annas in the rupee.

#### 5. The Hindu Religious Endowment Board ; Kshatriyas and the Veerasaiva Claim to the Temple

In 1923 the Hindu Religious Endowment Act was passed by the Madras Government, and the Hindu Religious Endowment Board was constituted in 1925. It had a President and two members for its Commissioners. The Lingayat and Jangam opponents of the Kshatriyas now saw a good opportunity to raise their claim to the temple. C. Panchanna, the younger brother of S. Panchanna, stepped into his dead brother's role. He began to petition the Government and the Board about the Kshatriya mismanagement and the misappropriation of temple funds.

A few other Lingayat servants of the temple, i.e., Panchama Pujaris, joined C. Panchanna. Allegations were made that the Kshatriyas were bankrupts who had misappropriated temple funds, pledged all the jewellery of the deity and mortgaged the 'sword bearers' inam land, and so forth. This information was given to the Government and the Board. Many villagers of Dharwar district gave petitions to this effect.

Meanwhile the Jangam of Shivapur petitioned that he should be recognised as the trustee of the temple. He alleged that the Jangams were the original owners of the temple and that they appointed the Kshatriyas as caretakers (*Parupatyagars*) of the temple, and he charged the Kshatriyas with having misappropriated the position by assuming proprietorship. Failing in all other things, the intention of the Veerasaiva petitioners, especially the people of Kshetra was to see that the service land which was enjoyed by the people who served in the temple, should be brought under Government control.

It could be recalled that the British Government had recognised the inam lands of the temple about 1861 through the inam Settlement regulations. These lands were later enfranchised and registered in the names of service holders. Hence in the 1911-14 case V. Dharma-karta put forward the view that the temple inam were not endowments for the deity but for the several servants of the temple. His argument

was that the temple was not a 'public institution' and did not come under the Government's jurisdiction because there were no endowments in the name of the deity. As a result the temple was claimed to be the private property of the Kshatriyas.

I have already pointed out how the Government was not prepared to concede this. This issue lay dormant for a decade. But now some of the Lingayat temple servants—Panchama Pujaris—volunteered to support the view that the personal inam of the temple, which is connected with services in the temple, is as good as 'public property'. Hence it would be only right if the property came under the control of the Government.

These attempts were directed against the service inam lands of the Kshatriyas which were mortgaged to B. Kadale. The lands were personal inams almost like private-owned (*patta*) lands. If the personal lands were now transferred to the name of the deity, the petitioners thought they had a good argument with which to trap the Kshatriyas. This was welcome to the Government and was given effect to in 1924, when all the land enjoyed by the service holders was transferred from personal inam to the name of the deity (*devadayam*).

The number of the petitions and telegrams against the Kshatriyas that poured into the office of the Board at Madras compelled them to take up the matter seriously. Unmindful of the Kshatriya protest against the Jangams of Shivapur, the Board recognized them as a party in this suit. Enquiries and on the spot investigations were carried out by Board officials. However, both Jangams and Kshatriyas went out of their way to produce evidence in support of their claim to the temple. B. Kadale was one of the witnesses examined on behalf of the Kshatriyas. He supported the Kshatriyas against the Lingayats.

In 1926, the Board temporarily recognised the hereditary trusteeship of the Kshatriyas and ruled out the Jangams' claim. The two Commissioners, who conducted separate enquiries into the temple affairs, came out with diverging views. Hence the need arose for a careful perusal of the situation by the Brahmin President of the Board.

In accordance with a court ruling, it was declared by the President that the Jangams' claim to the temple was barred by 'limitation.' A time interval of sixty years is officially allowed by court, during which time the owner of a property could claim his rights. In this case it was more than sixty years since the Kshatriyas had been the sole managers of the temple. Hence the Jangams could not realise



CHART 4  
The Claims to Temple Ownership (1915-26)

Plaintiffs : Name	Caste	Residence	Remarks	Adjudicators :	Defendants : Name	Caste	Residence	Remarks
1. Phalaksha Dharmakarta and family	Jangam	Shivapur	Claimed proprietorship of Kshetra Linga temple and were supported by Parties 1-5 in chart 3 who were also fighting against the Kshatriyas.	The Government and the Hindu Religious Endowment Board	1. V. Dharmakarta and Family K. Dharmakarta. S.T. Dharmakarta.	Kshatriya	Kshetra	Temple proprietors claimed the temple as their private property.
A. Dharmakarta Registrar Brigadier Phalaksha Darmakarta				A. Personal inam became temple service land in 1924.				
2. C. Panchanna, brother of Five (above) in chart 3	L. Panchachara	Kshetra	Supported the Jangams against the Kshatriyas after the murder of his brother.	B. Jangam's claim to temple ruled out in 1926 by Board and the temple was declared an "excepted" one.				
3. Panchama Pujaris	"	"	Temple servants, responsible to bring the temple land under Govt. Control.					

their claim. The President also expressed doubts whether the Jangams and his predecessors had ever in fact been proprietors of this temple.

It was declared that the office of 'sword bearer' was to be continued by the Kshatriyas and the Board appointed some honorary visitors. The temple was declared 'Excepted' : partly public and partly private. The office of the trustee was declared an experimental one, until experience proved whether or not any changes should be effected, thereby implying the appointment of co-trustees. The Board also ruled that the Kshatriyas should renovate the portion of the temple building and chariot which required repair and that the mortgaged lands should be released within a period of five years.

The judgment emphasized the importance of discharging the debts and releasing the mortgaged service—lands within a specified time. Failure to do so, it was made clear, would in itself provide good grounds for taking action against the Kshatriyas. Meanwhile the Board reserved the right to consider the appointment of co-trustees and also to draw up a scheme of administration for the temple.

On the whole, this gave the Jangams the hope of trying their luck again, by petitioning the Board and requesting them to appoint their candidates as visitors and one of them as co-trustee. All the three persons suggested were Veerasaivas, and two of them were from the Jangams' own family. The Kshatriyas, on the other hand, gave some twenty names of persons belonging to the Veerasaiva, Brahmin and Jain castes, drawn from both Madras and Bombay Presidency, from villages both far and near. The list included a few local Lingayats, with B. Kadale's name at the top.

The partisans of the Jangams still continued to petition, on the ground that the temple was a place of pilgrimage for Veerasaivas, as it contained a deity which was an incarnation of Shiva. The right of the Jangam over the temple was claimed on this pretext.

The Kshatriyas on the other hand declared Veerasaivism to be a religion of dissent from traditional Hindu beliefs and practices. A Veerasaiva should not worship anything other than his personal linga. Since worship in the temple was carried on along orthodox lines, the Kshatriyas asserted that the Lingayats should have no access to the innermost part of the shrine where the image of the deity was housed. This went on from 1925 to 1929, when the Kshatriyas at last succeeded in disapproving the claims of the Jangams.

The Kshatriyas now started a new deal with the Board over the scheme of administration with specific reference to the sources of

income to the temple and the Kshatriyas. Between 1929 and 1933, the Board drew up a scheme of administration for the temple, when it finally dropped the idea of appointing co-trustees and honorary visitors. Instead, it created the post of an Executive Officer who would represent the Board and keep the accounts of the temple.

The Board confirmed the law of primogeniture with regard to the trusteeship of the Kshatriyas. But it laid claim to the revenue collections that were made in the name of the deity, especially those connected with the granting of emblems to votaries and the voluntary contributions of pilgrims collected during festival times.

The money collected from the above sources was hitherto unaccounted and unaudited. But now the Executive Officer was empowered to be present on these occasions and to maintain a strict account of money which came from these sources to form the temple funds. The financial sources of the Kshatriyas as trustees and leaders of the cult were defined and regulated. Limits were placed on them and this reduced the income of the Kshatriya families.

The time was drawing near, when the Kshatriyas had to give evidence of the release of mortgaged lands before the Board to be able to continue in the office of trustee. The scheme of administration with regard to temple revenue laid down by the Board circumscribed the Kshatriyas' freedom of action. B. Kadale released the Kshatriyas from the irksome position in which they were caught. He appeared before the Board, told them that he had usufructuary rights over (nearly 120 acres of) land for the interest of the loans. Later he issued receipts on unstamped paper to the effect that the loans had been repaid. The Kshatriyas presented these receipts to the Board and the Board accepted them. But B. Kadale continued to utilise the lands.

The trusteeship became a well-established possession of the Kshatriyas and left them almost without rivals. So they felt that it was time for them to approach B. Kadale, settle matters with him and get back the lands. Around 1930-31, a younger member of the Kshatriya family, Mr. N. Dharmakarta, approached B. Kadale and was shown the accounts. The outstanding debt was nearly Rs. 13,000. My Kshatriya informants told me that B. Kadale changed Rs. 3,000 into Rs. 13,000 while all the money had really been repaid. However, N. Dharmakarta puts his signature in the account book, pondered a little and tried to snatch the book itself. B. Kadale and his clerk prevented N. Dharmakarta from doing this and saved the account book. This sowed the seeds of yet another dispute.



## 6. The Chillie-Powder Case, (1932-35)

The friendliness implicit in the Kshatriya's debt-relationship now turned into rivalry and bitter antagonism. The dispute was centred around loans raised by pledging the temple lands. The release of the 'sword bearers' land had a direct bearing on the office of the Kshatriya trusteeship. As service-lands stood in the name of the deity, service holders could not pledge or sell them.

The following series of disputes are significant because the Lingayats fought against the Kshatriyas not simply for personal reasons, although they did have personal interests in the temple lands. Deeper motives, like questioning the Kshatriyas prerogatives to be leaders of the cult and proprietors of the temple, were at the root of this. 'Temple politics', i.e. the involvement of the temple in lawsuits, now led to its involvement in politics, and to the decline of Kshatriya power locally. These disputes again became partly responsible for Kshatriya aloofness from the village social life and for their eagerness to consider the followers of the cult from outside as more important than the villagers. The village was for them reduced in social value and the Kshatriya position became a 'strangers position'.<sup>1</sup>

B. Kadale, who was an intimate friend and had stood by the side of the Kshatriyas till now, changed his attitude. He was a money-lender who was friendly to the Kshatriyas as long as the latter had articles to pledge and sell. B. Kadale knew the bankruptcy of the Kshatriya family only too well. He probably thought that the Kshatriyas would never be able to liquidate the debt and take back their lands from him. Even for the sake of shelter, when the Kshatriyas were obliged to B. Kadale, it was a far-fetched idea to ask for the return of lands or go to court to fight for them.<sup>2</sup>

B. Kadale's wealth had increased and he was accepted by some local Lingayats by the time he fell out with the Kshatriyas. B. Kadale's father had migrated to Kshetra and married there. But it was not until B. Kadale grew up and built up a large fortune as a wholesale dealer in cotton that the family became locally powerful. B. Kadale's ambition was to invest his profits in land. For agricul-

1. Frankenberg, 1957, *Village on the Border*, pp. 18-19. The author gives three or four definitions of 'strangers', and their role. In one place he says, "Strangers (who are not necessarily 'outsiders') are brought into an activity to take the responsibility and withstand the unpopularity of leadership and the taking of decisions". The position and role of the Kshatriyas of Kshetra today is very similar to the above definition of 'strangers'.
2. Bailey, F. G. 1960, Chapter V, B. Kadale's techniques for amassing land and wealth are comparable to Dibi Kohoro especially in this context.

ture and ownership of land, in village India, has not only high prestige value, but provides an added security against the hazards of business. To-day it is evident that the Kadale family has dropped out of business, and have become prosperous peasant farmers in the village.<sup>1</sup>

To begin with, as a businessman, B. Kadale probably saw greater prospects of increasing his wealth by being friendly with the Kshatriyas. This friendship was welcome to the Kshatriyas also as they were encountering antagonism from other local Lingayats. But when they became contending parties, the unforeseen local situation also helped to strengthen it. The new forces changed the course of action.

A few Lingayats who coveted B. Kadale's wealth and power, now took sides with the Kshatriyas. They wanted to mediate, but B. Kadale refused to attend a Panchayat meeting convened by them. Instead he insulted them. Infuriated by this treatment, the Lingayats gave moral and financial support to the Kshatriyas to take the case to court.

The lower court decided in favour of the Kshatriyas and ordered that the lands be returned. Since it was necessary to occupy the fields by force, the Kshatriyas, or more exactly the Lingayats on the Kshatriya side, mobilized some more Lingayat tenants and set out to plough the fields. The party anticipated a fight and they were well prepared to meet any emergency. The people who went to the fields on behalf of the Kshatriyas were equipped with large quantities of well-ground chillie powder. B. Kadale's party went armed with lathis, sickles and other things. A fight ensued. B. Kadale's party was put to flight when chillie powder was thrown into their eyes by the other party. No one was seriously hurt, although B. Kadale's party was severely beaten.

A civil case was already in progress ; now a criminal case, hereafter called the 'chillie-powder' case, was instituted. The net result was that the village was split into two. Some of my informants who participated in this fight gave a vivid description of the fight and its consequences. The leaders cited in the case constituted about twenty five on each side. Most of them were Lingayats, although there were also a few non-Lingayats. But no Untouchable was involved.

1. Bailey, F.G. 1957, Chapter IX & X. The distiller castes invested their amassed wealth in land.

A Brahmin school master<sup>1</sup> was also in the Kshatriya party according to B. Kadale.

Meanwhile, B. Kadale's party advanced to take possession of the joint family household of the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas sold the house to B. Kadale in a public auction around 1925. He had allowed them to live in the house until then in accordance with a mutual agreement. But now the tables were turned. Kshatriya youths and other informants in the village told me that B. Kadale's party molested Kshatriya women. But some of the members of B. Kadale's party told me that this was an exaggeration. All that happened was that the Kshatriyas refused to concede the peaceful occupancy of the house.

The house was almost empty when the lock was broken open. The Kshatriyas who knew that such a thing would happen had already dispatched all their women-folk to their natal homes and removed their family possessions. The house was locked, while one of the younger members of the Kshatriya family was sitting outside to obstruct the occupation of the house. One of his sisters was on her 'child bed' inside the house. A talawari woman of B. Kadale's party conducted the woman and the child to safety outside the house. But the Kshatriya youths told me that the woman tried to throw the child into the well, and the mother had to run to prevent this. This incident resulted in the filing of a second criminal case by the Kshatriyas against B. Kadale.

Many villagers took sides as witnesses on behalf of both the parties. The criminal case which involved most villagers lasted for nearly three years. The parties used to go to the court in bullock-carts. Each time it would take them nearly a week to return to Kshetra. At such times, the village consisted mostly of women and children, and if some outsiders had raided the village, there would not have been many able-bodied men to defend it. Fortunately nothing of that sort happened.

The partisans of each party were seriously engaged in court dealings at the cost of the cultivation of their lands. Indeed they neglected them so much that eventually they were faced with famine conditions. Both the criminal cases were dismissed as due to local enmity. Now it dawned on the people who had rallied around both

1. Srinivas, 1955, Op. Cit. p. 33. The higher ritual status of a Brahmin and of Kshatriyas did not count when it came to fighting in the field. B. Kadale's party had beaten one of the Kshatriyas, but no Untouchables were involved. This is contrast with Srinivas's suggestions.



leaders, that neither of the leaders were hurt nor had suffered any loss. But the followers had done so. Gradually the tense atmosphere disappeared and normal social relations were restored.

The Kshatriyas who were forced out of their ancestral house moved into the temple premises. In the temple premises there were small buildings housing minor deities and serving as rest houses for pilgrims. The deities were brought outside and the Kshatriyas occupied the houses. The temple premises were the only safe ground for them. Since their women-folk were away at their natal homes and since there was no single large building to house all its members, the joint family was automatically split. Heads of nuclear families occupied different houses.

It was from this time onwards that the Kshatriyas gave up drinking river water (in contrast to the villagers). Before that, Kshatriya women used to go to the river in the evening and fetch water. But the women were absent from Kshetra for more than fifteen years. They came back when Kshetra saw comparatively peaceful days. It was too late—in the sense that the Kshatriyas remain in but not of the village—to resume the fetching and drinking of river water. All Kshatriya families today drink well water. This water is less brackish than that of the other wells in the village. The well is their private property just outside the temple compound.

The civil case between B. Kadale and the Kshatriyas continued till 1950, when the parties compromised. The Kshatriyas agreed that B. Kadale should enjoy some fifty acres of their land for another ten years and return it to them. No further litigation ensued between the time of this compromise and the death of B. Kadale around 1955, although no cash repayments on the loan were made.

S. Kadale, the son of B. Kadale, now enjoys the use of the land. The land must be returned to the Kshatriyas after the 1960 harvests, i.e., early 1961. The Kshatriya youths pointed out that the field was neglected and not properly manured. In addition they speculated that S. Kadale and his party had been manipulating the tenancy laws to take possession of the land. Under the tenancy act, a minimum of five years cultivation of a stretch of land gives the tenant a right to claim ownership of land against the real owner. But this remains to be seen.

#### **7. The Kshatriya Trustee and the Lingayat Panchama Pujaris**

The fight of 1932, the chillie-powder case, which split the

village and disrupted the social ties between people, had further repercussions. People began to give expression to the cleavage in many other ways. One of these concerned the Panchama Pujaris who were enjoying the use of the service inam lands of the temple. These Panchachara Lingayats now took sides with B. Kadale. They neglected all their duties in the temple but continued to enjoy the temple lands. In fact, the land had been parcelled out further at each partition of a joint family among service-holders.

The Board, which had by this time laid down rules and regulations about temple administration, had empowered the trustee to dismiss and take possession of the land of such of the service-holders who had failed to do their traditional work in the temple. The trustee also had the power to reappoint or appoint people of his own choice. Accordingly the trustee began to put this power into use. Between 1937-43, sixty-four of these service-holders (among them forty-eight Panchachara Lingayats), were dismissed and the land was taken over by the trustee.

The trustee appointed a new Brahmin temple priest and one of the Panchama Pujari, (they light lamps in the temple). The Kuruba flower supplier, the holder of the silver cane and the priest of Denkana Mardi were also new appointees. The Kanchaveeras were retained, as their services could not be transferred to others, while the Cheluvadi pipers were now engaged on a monthly salary basis, as against all the new appointees who continued to enjoy the use of service land, although the extent was considerably reduced in some cases. Figures about the redistribution of land to temple service-holders are given in the following table. In addition, three Lingayat families were in the service of two minor temples which come under the main temple. They also enjoyed the use of service inam land. From the records it seems that only one of them was newly appointed.

It is clear from the list of temple servants that some of the dismissed Lingayat servants came back to serve in the temple. Economic expediency seems to be given top priority. Their dismissal did not mean humiliation nor did they rigorously contest the authority of the Kshatriya trustee or the Kshatriya Proprietorship of the temple. Caste loyalty and even kinship ties<sup>1</sup> did not prevent them from coming back to serve in the temple. This implies a cleavage among

1. Bailey, F. G. 1960, Chapter VIII. Economic Expediency overrided other interests in the case of Ponga.

the Lingayats which possibly accounts for their disunity and failure. It is this disunity which has always enabled the Kshatriyas to maintain their position against Lingayat encroachment, although there are other equally weighty reasons.

**TABLE V**  
**Re-distribution of Temple Land Among Service-holders**  
**(Temple Record 1954)**

	<i>Office</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Acres-Cents</i>
1.	Temple Priest	Brahmin	25-82
2.	Sword Bearer	Kshatriya	177-61
3.	Panchama Pujari	Panchachara Lingayat	28-98
4.	Flower Supplier	Kuruba	9-65
5.	Mardi Priest	Kuruba	16-53
6.	Malدار	Kuruba	4-89
7.	Miracle Play	Kanchaveeras	17-89
8.	Minor Temple Priest	Panchachara Lingayat	9-39
9.	Minor Temple Priest	Panchachara Lingayat	10-19
10.	Minor Temple Priest	Panchachara Lingayat	9-52
Total			<u>310-47</u>

#### **Salaried Posts**

1.	Executive Officer	Weaver (alien)	Rs. 91/- P.M.
2.	Pipers (Total three)	Cheluvadis	Rs. 75/- „
3.	Peon	Kuruba	Rs. 30/- „
4.	Palanquin Bearer	Panchachara Lingayat (alien)	Rs. 4/- „
Total land of Kshetra Linga Temple including four minor deities			662-26
Total land held by service-holders			<u>310-47</u>
Balance			351-79

*Notes :* The balance of land is leased to tenants on a five-year lease and the cash derived forms an important source of temple funds.

It is equally true that the Kshatriyas are dependent on the villagers. The necessity to re-appoint the dismissed servants of the temple is important from the Kshatriya viewpoint. The Kshatriyas could not disregard their relationship with the local people. To bring strangers or to appoint an entirely new set of people in the temple was neither desirable nor practicable. Hence dismissed people were re-appointed.



The Kshatriyas and Brahmins do not undertake to light the lamps in the temple or whitewash the shrine. Those who undertake to do it ought to be of some high caste and the re-appointment of Lingayats solved the problem. Interdependence of castes and division of labour are still striking phenomena in the working of the temple routine.

Half of the dismissed Lingayat servants—Panchama Pujaris—in the first instance petitioned the Board and then went to the court to assert their right to the temple lands. I have already explained the device, which some of the Panchama Pujaris adopted in 1924, of converting all personal inam service-holding to the name of the deity. It was intended to harass the Kshatriyas trustee who had mortgaged his share of service-lands. Upon transfer, individuals lost their right to mortgage or sell the land, as now all the land stood in the name of the deity.

From 1943 onwards, the Panchama Pujaris went to court against the trustee and the Board to fight for individual rights to temple land. In 1924, they eagerly invited the Government and the Board to lay hands on the temple property. But now they started putting forward individual claims to the very property they themselves had brought under 'external control'.

The Panchama Pujaris asserted that the land was their personal inam, and that the trustee could not dispossess them. They claimed that they had as much right to enjoy the use of the land as the trustee himself, who had nearly 177 acres for 'sword bearers' service.

The Panchama Pujaris further asserted that the Kshatriyas, like the Panchama Pujaris, were equally servants of the temple and not masters. They thereby implied that the Kshatriyas took service under the Jangams of Shivapur, but assumed proprietorship by deceiving the Jangams. In their fight for their cause, the Panchama Pujaris, freely made use of the evidence and services of the Jangams of Shivapur. The Jangam is the spiritual teacher of most Panchama Pujari families. The district court delivered judgment in favour of the Kshatriyas in 1958.

After the judgment, the district judge, a Madiga by caste, visited Kshetra, probably at the request of the Kshatriyas. He was given a grand reception by the Kshatriyas when they offered him a special and very expensive cardamom garland, prepared and bought for the occasion from Haveri. He was taken round the temple as usual and treated to a grand dinner. However, most of the Lingayats

took no notice of either the visit of the judge or the party given to him.

The Panchama Pujaris appealed against the district court judgment. Today, the case is pending in the Bangalore High Court. Only four of them are pursuing the case. Their share of land is negligible, only some 17 acres and 51 cents. But should they win the case, a total of 169 acres and 51 cents, that they have been deprived of will come back to all the Panchama Pujari families.

### 8. The Horse Case (1942-51)

While the Panchama Pujari case was in progress, in the early 1940's, the Kshatriyas and other non-Lingayat castes in the village thought of celebrating the festival of the village deity, Uramma. At the turn of the century the festival used to be celebrated annually, and bull-buffaloes, sheep, and goats were slaughtered by Madigas and other non-Lingayat castes. Uramma was also propitiated when the village was threatened with epidemics of plague and cholera.

The Uramma festival brought the whole village together. In fact, contributions were made by members of all castes in the village. Although the Panchachalas were priests in the Uramma temple, the Kshatriyas used to take a leading part in fetching the deity from Panavalli, a village in Dharwar district some six miles from Kshetra. The Kshatriyas who were busily occupied in court litigations from 1910 onwards, thought it fitting to propitiate Uramma after a long interval.

The story of fetching the deity from Panavalli is that in olden days the image used to be kept in a wooden box, which was stolen from Kshetra by a band of thieves. The thieves mistook the box for a treasure chest and carried it across the river into the Bombay Presidency. They opened the box near Panavalli, but were terrified to find a huge cobra inside it. So they abandoned the box and fled.

The following day a party of cowherds, young boys of Panavalli, came there with their herd. One of them was possessed by Uramma. The Goddess announced through the possessed boy that she had been brought there from Kshetra. She further ordered the Panavalli people to build a temple and install her image there. The cowherds gave the information to the villagers. Accordingly, a temple was erected and the deity was installed.

Afterwards, the Panavalli people sent word to the Kshetra people as to what had been done. Since the deity could not be brought back to Kshetra, the people of Kshetra entered into an

agreement with the Panavalli people. According to this agreement, the Kshetra people would fetch the deity from Panavalli once a year, or whenever it was considered necessary and convenient to celebrate the festival. After the celebrations the Panavalli people would come and carry the deity home. A sort of spiritual brotherhood was established between the villages of the two villagers, although they came under different administrative units and were faced with difficulties in communication, such as crossing the Tungabhadra. One of my informants interpreted this as follows : "Uramma will visit her 'natal home' in Kshetra, once a year ; Panavalli is her 'husband's home'."

Preparations went ahead to celebrate the Uramma festival in the early 1940's. Communal contributions were raised from those who were willing to contribute voluntarily. Ceremonial objects such as a new saree for the deity were bought. It used to be the custom that the Kshatriyas would go to Panavalli on horseback to the accompaniment of much pomp and show, and the villagers would follow the procession and fetch the deity.

The village was already rift by factions. B. Kadale and the Panchama Pujaris urged by their hostility to the Kshatriyas, gathered some local Lingayats to challenge this prerogative of the Kshatriyas. They armed themselves with lathis to beat up the Kshatriyas riding on horseback. As the Kshatriyas could no longer impose their leadership on the entire village, they dropped the idea of going to Panavalli, but applied to the Government to grant them a licence to celebrate the festival. The grant of a licence still would not take them much further, for the Lingayats were ready to attack them on this score, once they mounted their horses.

Daunted by this, the Kshatriyas filed a suit against the Lingayat leaders. B. Kadale and C. Panchanna and a few Panchama Pujaris were the ring leaders. There was a shift in emphasis. The Kshatriyas claimed the right to ride horses when they went on tour among the followers of the cult to be one of the recognized prerogatives conferred on them by ancient usage and recognized by the Government. Since the local Lingayats were obstructing this, they sought Government help.

The Lingayats, led by B. Kadale, were bitter and poured out all their venom against the Kshatriyas. They started with the assumption that the Jangams of Shivapur were the real overlords of the Kshetra Linga temple and that the Kshatriyas of Kshetra had deceived them. They connected a story to challenge the validity of



the surname 'Dharmakarta' used by the Kshatriyas. They suggested that it was a title borrowed from the Jangams of Shivapur, who have the same surname.

The Lingayats accused the Kshatriyas of taking over a Shaivite temple though they themselves are Vaishnavites. The core of their argument was that Kshatriyas could not be the spiritual teachers of local Lingayats as they were elsewhere among the followers of the cult. Thus the real cause was never brought before the court.

The contending parties, however, were very vigilant. Just how vigilant is disclosed by the following episode. One of my Lingayat informants, who was an active participant, told me the following. "Matters connected with the above issue were lying dormant. The Lingayats were holding themselves in readiness to obstruct the Kshatriyas from mounting their horses at all costs. One day most of the Lingayat youths went to Ganganayakanahalli, a neighbouring village about four miles from Kshetra. A form of Lingayat communal worship, known as 'rudra puja' was taking place there. Before worship, there was a communal dinner. Kshetra youths were sitting in rows to eat food. Food was served on leaf plates and they had just put one morsel of food each in their mouths when they heard loud sounds of a large drum (*nagari*) coming from the direction of Kshetra. All the youths got up at once and began to run towards Kshetra. On their way, when they had already covered a good distance, they met a Jangam going towards Guruvathi from Kshetra. The youths stopped him and asked him why the big drums were being played. Were the Kshatriyas getting ready to go to Panavalli? The Jangam told them, 'There is no disturbance in Kshetra. For pleasure's sake someone is playing on the big drums in the Kshetra Linga temple'. (Incidentally the big drums belong to the temple). The youths were disappointed. They thought they were fooled. They were very hungry, but it was too late to go back for the communal dinner. Slowly they made their way home."

The 1942 Horse Case, or '*Kudure Vyajya*' as it is known in the court records, at last led the parties to compromise around 1951. The court ruled that Kshatriya horse-riding on occasions involving tours among the followers of the cult, should not be obstructed by the Lingayats. The Lingayats were successful to the extent that they succeeded in asserting that the Kshatriyas could not be their spiritual teachers.

The village deity festival, however, has not been celebrated again up to the time of writing. I am told that the ceremonial

articles bought in the early 1940's are still lying in the house of the Kshatriya President. Whether it ever will be celebrated is impossible to predict. The Kshatriyas who have enjoyed institutionalized or canalized political leadership for well over a decade, could have introduced it by now. The fact that they have not done so makes it doubtful whether the Kshatriya-Lingayat hostility is yet dead. The fact that the case of the Panchama Pujaris is pending in the court is probably one of the reasons why the Kshatriyas have not attempted to reassert their traditional ritual right.

### 9. Decline of Kshatriya Influence in Village Rituals and the Pervasiveness of Temple Politics

Since the 1942 'disturbances' the Kshatriyas have given up three more important ritual rights on ceremonial occasions in the village. All of them were connected with the Kshetra Linga temple. The abandoned rights were that of distributing consecrated turmeric powder (*bhandar*) among the Lingayat households ; of accompanying the deity in a ceremonial procession during the February festival ; and of leading the *Dasara* celebrations in a traditional place. These celebrations are now held on a new site.

During December the birth anniversary of the deity is celebrated on a grand scale in the temple. It is a big event in Kshatriya households. On this occasion, turmeric powder, which is distributed as 'bhandar' ('wealth' or 'treasure') among votaries and followers of the cult, is ceremonially prepared in the house of the trustee. This celebration is known as *Bhandara Shrasthi*. The ceremonially prepared turmeric powder is offered to the deity by a married Kshatriya to the accompaniment of a thousand sacred verses (*mantras*), recited by a Brahmin priest. A Kshatriya worships the 'self-generated Linga' in the temple one thousand times, each time by putting a little quantity of turmeric powder near the deity. The turmeric powder becomes consecrated in this way.

In the past, the Kshatriya trustee used to go on the following day around the village, especially to the houses of Veerasaivas, give the consecrated turmeric powder to the householder, and receive gifts of money. Today, this practice is no longer observed. Instead, in December 1959, the trustee sat with the consecrated powder for sometime at the throne house and then near the sacrificial house. People interested in getting bhandar came here and received it.

In the early 1940's Phalaksha Dharmakarta started distributing turmeric powder among the Lingayat's in imitation of the Kshatriyas.



Hence the Kshatriyas had to discontinue distributing it in the village. The Jangam himself discontinued the practice after three or four years. But the Kshatriyas have not revived their old practice.

During the annual February festival the Kshatriyas used to go with the deity in procession when the villagers used to hit one another with *kadubu*. A *kadubu* is a solid preparation shaped like swiss rolls, made out of jowar flour and cut into pieces of two or three inches in length, with which people hit one another. Whether the Kshatriyas changed their practice after an initial experience or thought it prudent to discontinue the practice is not clear.

The Kshatriyas gave up accompanying the deity on the particular night described as *Kadubina Kalagada dina* (day of warring with *kadubu*). Hitting one another was a ritual observance, and hence parties could not complain, however severely they were beaten on this occasion. The Lingayats would probably have substituted stones for *kadubu* to hit the Kshatriyas. Today only a Brahmin priest goes with the procession, while the villagers still participate in it.

During the 1960 February festival, a palanquin-bearer of Barike caste came back ten minutes after the procession had started. The procession was going through a Lingayat street when someone hit him severely on his neck with a stone. The Kshatriyas probably grasped what it would mean to accompany the deity on this occasion, and changed their course of action.

The last day of the Dasara celebrations during September-October is known as '*Vijaya Dasami*'. On this day the Kshetra Linga deity used to be taken out through the south gate to a nearby *Banni* tree (*Prosopis spicigera*) for worship. After 1942, the local Lingayats started taking a picture of Jangam Phalaksha Dharmakarta in procession on the same day, to the same place, approximately at the same time. Fearing a clash between the participants of the two parties, the Kshatriyas diverted their ritual to another place. Now the deity is taken in procession to a *Banni* tree some two or three furlongs away to the east of the village. The dual celebration of the Dasara festival continues in the village.

In the early 1940's B. Kadale sold the Kshatriya joint family building to the Jangams of Shivapur and thus helped to bring them into the village. Till then they did not have a footing in the village except by paying ceremonial visits among the Lingayat disciples. Upon acquiring the building, they have theoretically become part of



the village in so far as they own property, i.e., a residential house. Since the 1940's the building has been converted into a Mutt.

The parties in the above transaction had not taken into account any rational calculations of material benefit. The acquisition of the building was a sheer expression of bitterness and antagonism against the Kshatriyas. Neither Phalaksha Dharmakarta nor his brother have lived in the building after having acquired it. The building is a lasting memorial to the hostility between the Kshatriyas and the Veerasaivas. Phalaksha Dharmakarta himself is a Professor of Sanskrit at Chandore Maharaja College. He used to pay a ceremonial visit to Kshetra annually during the summer vacation (March-June). He did not visit Kshetra in the summer of 1960. All the brothers and nephews of Phalaksha Dharmakarta are well educated and highly placed and are dispersed all over Karnataka. One brother is a retired District Collector, two others are lawyers, a nephew is a Brigadier in the Army and another nephew is the Registrar of a University.

As I was leaving the field, I learnt that Phalaksha Dharmakarta was seriously ill. One of his brothers sent word to his disciples in Kshetra to raise contributions so that Phalaksha Dharmakarta could fly to Shivapur and spend his last days there. Phalaksha Dharmakarta died in February, 1961, but I do not know if the Lingayats sent any contributions of money, as they did not entertain the idea with any enthusiasm.

The vast Mutt building at Kshetra is in charge of a Lingayat servant, an old bachelor, whom generous Lingayat families feed daily. A picture of Phalaksha Dharmakarta is hung in the centre of the hall. The Mutt is sometimes used by the Lingayats to arrange dramas and musical programmes, or for wedding parties. Everybody in the village believes that it is a haunted place. Kshatriyas do not go near the house. They say no other family could live in the house, for a *Chowdi*, one of the fiercest incarnations of Parvati, was installed in one of the poles originally, when the Kshatriya ancestors built the house. That the house is bound to remain a Mutt is the conviction of the Kshatriyas. Others in the village attributed the Kshatriya saying to the fact that the Kshatriyas cannot get back the house from the Jangams of Shivapur. The Kshatriyas have always described the Jangams of Shivapur as their "hereditary enemies". So what has passed away from the hands of the Kshatriyas and into the hands of their enemies, such as the house in question, is not likely to come to the Kshatriyas. Hence the saying.

As late as 1954, the trustee, faced with the difficulty of not being able to lease the temple lands, had recourse to the Deputy Commissioner. Most of the land recovered from the Panchama Pujaris is today tenanted on the basis of five-year lease payable in cash. During 1954, the trustee complained against one M.M., a Lingayat Sadaru from Kolalu, who plays a prominent part in legaled and Government business in the village.

The trustee brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner that M.M. and the ex-temple servants, the dismissed Panchama Pujaris, were an obstacle to his intention of leasing the lands to the highest bidders in open auction.<sup>1</sup> It is disclosed that the Panchama Pujaris, having failed in their attempt to get back the land, next attempted to get it at the cheapest rate by obstructing other bidders. This would have been a loss to the temple. The money obtained from tenants forms one of the most important sources of the temple funds.

Besides, a decree from the Tahsildar's court in Hadagalli is pending execution against sixteen tenants as defaulters. Nine of them are Lingayats who have not paid the lease amount for two or three years. Individual defaulters explained to me that they had been tricked. The point, in fact, is that they did pay the amount to the President, who is also one of the seven successful bidders for the temple lands. Each bidder then sub-lets them to tenants. But no receipts were issued, and now people have no proof to show that they have paid. There was a rumour that sooner or later the Tahsildar would capture and auction all movable property from all defaulters if they did not pay the arrears in time. Should this happen, I do not know how the people would react, for most of the defaulters supported the President's party in the elections and they have supported the Kshatriyas for a long time. But the tables might be turned.

Many Lingayat peasants, even those who are friendly with the Kshatriyas, have agreed that so much of the village lands is held by the temple as inam land that it is difficult, if not impossible, for any private individual to become a considerable landowner in the village.<sup>2</sup> One of the Kshatriya youths always used to show me fields at a distance and say that they were all theirs. A Lingayat youth, now a college

1. Source of information : temple records, individual informants and officers dealing with these.

2. See "Landholding Pattern & Power-Relations in a Mysore Village, *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Sept.-Oct. 1968.



student, reacted to such assertions very sharply. What is interesting in this situation is that the Lingayats are enjoying the use of some inam lands of a minor deity which comes under the Kshetra Linga temple. Unmindful of this the Lingayat youth retorted almost in a harsh tone, "Why do you boast that all the lands are yours? They are all temple lands and your father is only a trustee. If you have any land, it is burdened with 'sword-service'."

The Kshatriya youth did not reply. It was a calculated insult offered to this Kshatriya youth in the presence of a stranger, i.e., myself. But this asperity does not imply that these Lingayats are weakening in their support for the President's party; merely that they support it for reasons of self-interest, and regard themselves as equals rather than as dependents of the Kshatriyas. Statements that the office of trustee is 'honorary' are also made with the implication that any person could hold it, and not necessarily a Kshatriya. Lingayat-Kshatriya friendship does not induce the former to accept the latter unreservedly.

From the beginning of my arrival in Kshetra in November, 1959, I noticed that the Kshatriyas kept very aloof. Elderly men tended to remain within the temple premises. There were only a couple of Kshatriya youths in the village. Most of them were away touring among the followers of the cult. It was not until the middle of January, 1960, that most of them returned to participate in the annual celebrations of the temple festival in February.

I used to ask the Kshatriya youths if they could tell me something of a certain X in the village. They used to say, "We don't know. We have nothing to do with the village or the villagers". It appeared as though they were haughty and aloof. But it soon dawned on me that this was due to their ignorance. The Kshatriya youths between 20 and 30 years of age had grown up in their mother's natal home (the Kshatriya women were sent to their natal homes for an indefinite period and returned to Kshetra only when it saw peaceful days), and as grownups they spend most of their time touring among the followers of the cult. Hence their knowledge about the village structure was very limited. These youths used to justify their ignorance not as bliss but as self-defence. The Lingayats in their estimation, since they are ritually different, are also ritually inferior to them.

I had never seen an elderly male member of the Kshatriya family go into the village and talk to the villagers voluntarily. The Panchayat Board President never stepped out. It was only his cousin,



a Bill Collector, who was on intimate terms with a few Lingayats, who, in other words, were the parties to suit temple lands. However, soon after the March-April, 1960 elections, the Bill Collector was no longer friendly with the Lingayats. Indeed, Kshatriya aloofness cannot properly be described as anti-social behaviour.<sup>1</sup> I suggest that they are trying to avoid getting involved with the dominant Lingayat caste by restricting their movement to the temple compound when they are in the village.

When the men are away from Kshetra, touring elsewhere, most Kshatriya families buy their groceries from the local Banajiga shops on credit. They pay them when the men return from a tour with cash. Although the Kshatriyas own some lands, they are not sufficient to ensure economic independence. No one cultivates the land on his own. Instead it is leased out to Lingayat tenants. Under the circumstances, the Kshatriyas depend on local Banajiga shops for provisions and other things.

Milk and milk products are almost always bought on an annual credit basis. What is more interesting is that they buy it from the very Lingayat families who are fighting for temple lands. In the atmosphere of social tension that exists between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats, such a transaction would seem to be not only unthinkable but could have led to many 'witchcraft' accusations according to the familiar pattern of African societies. Perhaps economic interests override the local situation in day-to-day relationships, while disputes are always referred to Government courts in an attempt to lessen the tension.

Fruit and vegetable sellers from Kolalu supply fruits and vegetables on credit too. They are paid as and when money or grain are on hand. The Kshatriya youths, who smoke heavily, get their beedis on a credit basis too. They also eat and drink in Lingayat hotels on credit. The buyer-seller relationship that exists between the Kshatriyas and the servicing castes, such as the barbers and washermen, is binding. The extent to which the Kshatriyas still remain dependent on the villagers is surprising. In fact Kshatriya dependence on the villagers is considerable but not by any means

1. Frankenberg, and Bailey, 1957.

Kshatriyas are 'outsiders' as well as 'strangers' in Frankenberg's sense of the term. It has a contemporary and a historical significance. I regret my inability to apply the concepts in any detail to analyse the situation.

In Bailey's sense, the Kshatriyas have been more "citizens of the state, although resident in the village". Kshatriya citizenship has a greater depth and meaning than the Ganjam distillers and the Boad outcastes in Bisipara.

total. Much of their income is drawn from outside the village, but is spent in the village by the Kshatriyas.

#### 10. The Temple as a Divisive Force in the Village

The name and fame of the village is primarily due to the existence of the temple. The temple is economically rewarding to the whole village ; an analysis of this would be interesting by itself, but I will omit it from the present discussion. Any improvement effected in the physical appearance of the village by the President of the Panchayat Board, Lingayats rationalize as being directed towards enhancing the status and prestige of the Kshatriyas, while the Kshatriyas think that the temple is the main attraction of the village. Improvements effected here are *ipso facto* improvements in the appearance of the village.

The coming of electricity, for instance, illustrates the above facts very well. Everybody in the village was happy when it first received its electric lights during February, 1960. But the Lingayat informants pointed out that all the best and most powerful lights were put to Kshatriya use. It was apparent that the Kshetra Linga temple was magnificently lit. By this the Lingayats meant that out of a total of six fluorescent lighting units of 80 watts, five were put to Kshatriya use and only one to that of the villagers.

The Electricity Department Inspector, Mr. K. Iyengar, had installed two lights of 80 watts in the temple premises, and one in front of the temple. Two more of these lights were installed near the Rest House, within a hundred yards, and these would attract the attention of any officer camping in the Rest House and lead to appreciation of the President's work. What is more interesting is that between these two powerful lights, they installed an ordinary light of 60 watts, on the pretext that it belonged to the school building that was being erected. Only one light of 80 watts illuminates the village square.

The village square has a common hall (*Chavadi*), a permanent drama stage, adjoining the Basavanna temple of the Lingayats. Informants asked, "Why shouldn't the Inspector put one light of 80 watts near the Basavanna temple or two for the whole village square as it is here that the crowds gather to see the village dramas?" It was concluded that the Inspector, who was occupying a portion of the President's house, acted as he was told by the President. In fact, they (the informants) went on to say that street lights are placed in front of the houses of people who are rich and influential.

As the work of the Inspector was nearing completion, he was expecting to leave Kshetra any time. The trustee gave the Inspector's wife a gift of a new saree. It was explained to me that the Inspector was a very conscientious worker. It is a good sign that there was no accident in the village in the process of getting electricity. A gift was considered a fitting appreciation, if not an indication of gratitude. The trustee reaffirms what the President does, although nobody in the village has seen them talk to one another.

The activities of the President are essentially geared to the improvement of the temple and the temple surroundings as far as his secular powers permit him. Since the trustee's aim is also the improvement of the temple so as to attract large crowds of pilgrims, he anticipates, affirms and defends what S.T. Dharmakarta does in his capacity as President. The twin offices of the trustee and the Village Panchayat Board President fortunately are not combined in one person. But all the same the goals of both are identical and there could be no clash over issues. This is evident from the electrification of the temple premises.

The temple is the focus of attention of both the President and the trustee. They maintain the fiction of looking at it from slightly different angles, although the goal is the same. The trustee would give first place to the improvement of the temple surroundings on the plea that this would lead to the better appearance of the village. The emphasis in fact is on improving the temple surroundings. I will illustrate this by referring to the electrification of the village.

According to the President, making the village attractive through electricity, roads and so forth, means providing better facilities for the pilgrims. This in reality automatically enhances the prestige of the Kshatriyas. Improving the temple is also improving the appearance of the village. Accordingly the trustee appreciates the plans for electrification and improving village roads, as they would add to the facilities for the pilgrims. In this scheme, there is no actual dividing line between the trustee and the President as far as their expectations and policies are concerned. Of course they are different persons, and have different offices, but as members of a single joint family, their interests tend to coincide. The basis of their work, in spite of their holding different offices, is the enhancement of the importance of the temple.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the role of the temple in inter-caste political relationships in Kshetra. Kshatriyas as temple



proprietors (long before they assumed secular political leadership) certainly constituted one of the dominant castes. They had official contacts, and as leaders of the cult, supervised the followers of the cult; even locally they enjoyed some informal leadership. The history of the temple during the first few decades of the 20th century throws light on the intercaste relationships. The disputes between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats constituted the struggle for power which was greatly aggravated by the influence of external forces. The Kshatriya success in establishing their claims to temple proprietorship in a way stabilised their dominant position. Hence it is necessary to consider the temple as a distinct source of political influence.

The introduction of the Village Panchayat Board, and the fact that one of the Kshatriyas was President from the beginning, has helped to increase the influence and power of the Kshatriyas enormously. The unity that is expressed in this combination of the Kshatriya trustee and his brother the Village Panchayat Board President, may be considered to emphasize the interdependence of temple and village politics. An analysis of secular politics in the village during the last ten years will illustrate this very well. But this does not make the temple a less divisive force in Kshetra. The Lingayats are quite conscious of the change and are alert to the situation.

Many Lingayats put forward arguments that reach rather untenable conclusions with regard to the presence of the temple and say that the pilgrims who come and unload all their sins in Kshetra by offering and worshipping the deity, consider it a place of pilgrimage. The villagers proper are left with these sins. Therefore, according to the Lingayats, they are not in a place of pilgrimage, but in a dreadfully sinful place. The inhabitants are laid open to supernatural misfortunes and hence to all the misery which has befallen them.

A Lingayat informant aptly summed up the situation as follows: "But for this temple and the court litigations over it, Kshetra would have rolled in riches (*E Devasthana, E Courtu Vyavahara illadiddare Kshetradalli chinnada hoge hayisabahudittu*)". The idea of a rich and contented Kshetra seems wishful against the background of the Kshatriya controlled temple and the religious divergence between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas. The religious dichotomy between Veerasaivism and orthodox Hinduism has been offered by the Lingayats as first class evidence in the long-drawn-out struggle between these two dominant castes. There are other facts to

the temple situation too. It is the resources of the temple which were covered by the Lingayats and today the temple has become an index of institutionalized political leadership.

The role of the temple in village politics is overt. Villagers are conscious of it, and the unsuccessful Lingayat leaders very much so. The importance and prestige of the Kshatriya controlled temple cult would be put to real test, if Lingayats could dominate village secular politics. Although the Kshetra Linga is the family deity of most Panchachara Lingayats, to them, worshipping the deity in the temple is one thing and fighting the Kshatriyas is quite another. The unsuccessful Lingayat leaders say that they are not discouraged by their failures to take the lead in village politics, for failures are stepping stones to success. That posterity will be benefited by their present failures is a conviction with them.

The divisive role of the temple outweighs its unifying capacity. This is demonstrated as far back as the his history of the temple and the relationship between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats could be traced through available records. The intercaste dispute over the temple opened the door to 'strangers' at the expense of the unity of the village. The disputes were intensified by the participation of these strangers. The Kshatriyas would have found it difficult to succeed against the local Lingayats, if the latter community had presented a unified front. The success of the Kshatriyas was largely due to outside help. The outside forces stimulated and still continue to stimulate the Lingayats against the Kshatriyas.

Several points testify to the looseness of organization and lack of unity among the Lingayats. The numerical size of the community in relation to the total population of the village could be taken as one important factor. Internal structural differences among Lingayats, viewed in a historical perspective, are a hindrance to unity. (See Lingayat sub-castes in the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism). There is no single religious authority which acts as a binding force. I have already pointed out how a single sub-caste, like the Panchacharas in Kshetra has some 15 different spiritual teachers. The authority of both the family and personal spiritual teachers is weak. Again within the sub-castes, the length of residence—whether recent immigrants or permanent residents—accounts for unity or otherwise. Occupations—business and agriculture—have kept Lingayats more or less divided amongst themselves. Above all a readiness to exploit ties of friendship for their own economic



advantage, has been displayed by the Lingayats at different stages of the dispute with the Kshatriyas. B. Kadale provides a striking example of an immigrant who took sides with the Kshatriyas against the Lingayats. It was paying him to do so initially.

The smaller Lingayat sub-castes are always on the Kshatriya side. This emphasizes their differences, and their fear of being dominated by a greater majority, namely, the Panchacharas in Kshetra. Often, important interpersonal ties exist between members of the Kshatriya family and the pro-Kshatriya Lingayat sub-castes. A sub-caste supporting the Kshatriyas helped them individually as well as as a group. As a group they were able to keep the line of demarcation between various sub-castes. Individually they are rewarded as in the case of the Banajiga shopkeepers from whom the Kshatriyas buy provisions. Self-interest in promoting economic ties weighed heavily. Unlike agriculturists, business people cannot get entangled in a long drawn-out struggle. Wasting time in vain court litigations is not a good proposition. These and similar motives have kept the Lingayat community divided within itself. No serious disputes have occurred among the Lingayats, such as those manifest between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats. Yet part of the Kshatriya success in all the court litigations is due to the lack of unity among the Lingayats.

The temple and its property widened the cleavage between the two dominant castes. The violence and aggression involved in these disputes was also due to economic factors which benefited the individual and the group. With the legal confirmation of trusteeship and other prerogatives of the Kshatriyas, the Lingayat group interest was removed. The antagonism took a different shade. Lingayats challenged the validity of Kshatriya prerogatives in the temple cult. This is evident from the 'Horse Case' described above. This also resulted in a further decline of the Kshatriya role locally in so far as the Kshatriyas have given up or changed some of the ceremonial observances in the temple. The Kshatriyas' aloofness in the village and their preference for 'outsiders'—such as the followers of the cult—is understandable in this light. Living away from the active social life of the village is rationalized by the Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas say that they have nothing to do with the village or the villagers.

In recent years, the decline in the ritual prerogatives of the Kshatriyas has been accompanied by an increased participation in the secular politics of the village. The creation of the Village



Panchayat Board, with a Kshatriya as its President, has given them access to a new source of power over the villagers. The President decides what is good for the village, in terms of enhancing the status of the Kshatriyas and the temple cult. The acquisition of leadership in village politics and the increased contacts with officials have thrown open opportunities to the Kshatriyas not only to assert themselves against the Lingayats but also to play off one group against another.

Democracy and the principle of election to office in the Village Panchayat Board have of late tended to rationalize and canalize this antagonism. Individual Lingayats, who were indebted to the Kshatriyas in some way, perhaps through getting agricultural loans or the lease of temple land or a favourable settlement of a court case through personal influence, have contributed to cementing Kshatriya-Lingayat interpersonal relationships. But the Lingayats who are opposed to the Kshatriyas exhibit their antagonism in the elections. Thus, they set up candidates in opposition to the Kshatriyas and do not co-operate with the President in his scheme of village improvement. Such non-cooperation may take the form of refusing to give up an individual plot of land for the construction of a school building or to give donations to build a school.

The Kshatriyas' influence, and above all their power and prestige, have become proverbial among the Lingayats. The contacts of the Kshatriyas with officials are looked upon with aversion rather than admiration. An analysis of village politics will indicate how Lingayat opposition to Kshatriya control of the temple—temple politics—at the turn of the 20th century, which started with a couple of families, has today reached a stage when roughly one-third of the Veerasaiva community can openly express defiance and stand by the opposition party in secular politics.

Other castes are also drawn into this conflict, but few members of non-Lingayat and Untouchable castes openly support the Lingayats against the Kshatriyas. In the chapter that follows, I will focus my attention on the organization and activities of the Village Panchayat Board in the last ten years, i.e. 1950-60. I shall now analyse village politics in relation to the Village Panchayat Board, a field of activity in which the cleavage between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas plays a major role.

The introduction of Panchayatiraj institutions and the formation of the new Mysore state have strengthened and encouraged the Lingayats. The right to vote and contest in the elections has increased

the importance of individual Lingayats who aspire to participate in politics. Further, the elections to the State Assembly and Parliament have awakened a fresh wave of caste consciousness among people since candidates for the Assembly and Parliament usually solicit votes on caste and similar considerations. In the enlarged Mysore state formed during 1957, Lingayats constitute nearly 20% of the total population. Increasing outside contact and the emergence of Lingayats as leaders at the state level is in fact providing fresh opportunities to Kshetra Lingayats to explore new possibilities of exerting themselves against the Kshatriyas.

## CHAPTER VII

## VILLAGE SECULAR POLITICS

INTERCASTE political relations have a two-fold connotation in Kshetra. First of all there is the religious dichotomy between the two dominant castes. The religious dichotomy between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats, in other words, may be regarded as a source of disunity among the Lingayats. Time and again some Lingayats parties have tended to exploit the dichotomy to further their own sectional interests. The chapter on temple politics sheds enough light on how Lingayats took sides with the Kshatriyas against members of their own community.

The Kshatriyas and Lingayats of Kshetra could be described here as constituting two dominant castes on the basis of a variety of criteria. Lingayats form the largest single communal group here. Landed wealth is concentrated in their hands, and a group of youngsters with a degree of formal education is about to emerge among them. The Kshatriyas on the other hand continue to remain politically and religiously dominant by supervising the temple cult and making use of their official contacts.

The fact that these two groups profess to belong to two different religious orders, one 'pro-Sanskritic' and the other 'anti-Sanskritic' makes them contending parties. The religious cleavage is intensified by the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple. The temple, a religious centre, became a platform for active political conflict.



Hence the temple is a visible symbol of cleavage in Kshetra. Rivalry and antagonism, and the competition for power and wealth, until recently have kept the two dominant groups always vigilant. Also the course of events in the village involved changing alignments with external agents and the villagers.

In the previous chapter, I have analysed the political role of the temple. The temple which was the principal focus of intercaste economic and political activities until 1949, has brought about certain changes. Today, the temple is no longer central to the overt competition between the two dominant castes. This does not mean that the temple is any the less a divisive force. The principle of election to offices in the statutory body has helped to transform and canalise the direct antagonism, so that the temple enters secular politics in a very subtle and indirect manner.

In the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism, I have explained how certain customary and occupational differences between the various sub-castes and caste-groups can be linked with the disunity prevalent among the Lingayats. Members of different caste groups who otherwise had very little in common were recruited to Veerasaivism by Basava and his followers in the 12th century. Conversion to Veerasaivism from other castes is still prevalent as is evident from the Kuruba Lingayats of Kshetra. The religious dogmas and practices of the Veerasaivas are different from those of orthodox Hindus. In Kshetra the religious cleavage between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats as orthodox and dissenting Hindus respectively is rationalised and emphasized both by the Kshatriyas and by some Lingayats. The Lingayats who emphasize this religious difference are also aware of the economic and political advantages that would accrue if the Kshatriya managed Saivite temple become Lingayat property. This can no longer happen as Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple has been legalised by the Government.

The emergence of the temple as an object of religious and political rivalry has been followed by the creation of new political offices in the village, viz. that of the statutory Panchayat President, as well as that of the quasi-religious office of temple trustee. Both offices are held by senior members of the Kshatriya family, and a strong sense of the identity of their interests prevails among the office-holders. Each office-holder tends to use his position to maintain and strengthen the position of the family in the village. By the same token, this has led to a decrease in cooperation, and to competition

and opposition, and has sharpened the antagonism between the Kshatriyas and Lingayats who aspire to political power.

The Lingayat parties which had opposed the Kshatriyas when the intercaste relationship was centered on the temple, today express their antagonism through the medium of the elections. In the past, direct economic interests in the temple widened the cleavage. Today, it is not the economic interest in the temple, but the basic religious dichotomy between the Veerasaivas and the Kshatriyas, and the numerical preponderance of the former and the dominance of the latter who are in a minority and the consequent sense of loss for the Veerasaivas that has become increasingly important in the struggle for political power.

The elections have released a fresh set of factors to strengthen the cleavage. The democratic principle of election to political offices has evoked a response in individuals as well as in caste-groups. It is not actual equality, but a sense of equality of opportunity which prompts individuals and groups to support one party against another. Also, the two dominant castes have tried to obtain influence, and to wield power by manoeuvring and rallying around them a large number of other castes which are dependent on them for one thing or another. The democratic institutions with their secular values and their superimposition on the traditional structure are showing visible changes. The cleavages are strengthened and traditional values still dominate to the extent that the Kshatriyas continue to enjoy the offices.

### 1. Formal, Informal and Statutory Panchayats

Village politics might be discussed under a number of different aspects, such as the contrast between formal and informal Panchayats. Informal Panchayats are often voluntary associations of individuals which arbitrate over quarrels, exercise judicial authority, and settle cases. Members of caste councils, village elders and persons with forensic skill or ability to effect reconciliation between parties, can be informal *Panchayatdars*. Sometimes the formal and informal Panchayat may overlap. Often ad hoc Panchayats are effective bodies for they settle emergency cases immediately. Wangala and Dalena provide very good illustrations of the working of such Panchayats.<sup>1</sup>

Formal Panchayats may be subdivided into traditional and statutory types.

1. Epstein. T.S. 1962, Op. Cit., pp. 114-53, 276-92.

The traditional Panchayat system is concerned with the study of village administration through a hereditary headman, accountant and menials, who come under Government control and diverse channels of authority.

A statutory administration or institutionalized, or, in a sense, canalized political leadership<sup>1</sup> has emerged with the creation of self-governing Village Panchayat Boards (V.P.B.). This has become increasingly important since India attained independence. It is based on the democratic principle of election to offices by a majority vote. The V.P.B. is headed by a President, who comes under the direct supervision of the District Collector. Also there is a Vice-President<sup>2</sup> and a certain number of members, elected to the Board by the villagers. They assist the President in his work. The V.P.B. as a body represents the village to the Government and interprets the Government to the villagers especially on village welfare and developmental schemes.

## 2. Informal Panchayat : Nature & Scope

Informal ad hoc Panchayats are a regular feature of village India.<sup>3</sup> Informal Panchayatdars may be drawn from any caste provided they show the ability to argue and effect a settlement or give a decision that most people would deem satisfactory. It is not the caste status alone, but the power of personality and qualities of leadership that matter. Parties to disputes from higher castes may seek advice and accept the decision of a Panchayatdar of a lower caste. But normally the services of elders of higher castes, as informal Panchayatdars, are sought and accepted by all. They are not necessarily members of the V.P.B. or the traditional Panchayat.

In Kshetra, informal and ad hoc Panchayats (the latter constituted in emergency situations) have existed and functioned throughout the years. My informants made categorical statements regarding the qualities of a Panchayatdar rather than of his caste status and

1. I define 'canalized political leadership' as that which overcomes direct antagonism by transferring or diverting it into different fields of activity. For example, in Kshetra, the Veerasaiva economic interest in the Kshatriya-controlled temple in recent years has been replaced by the political aspirations of the former. Hence the Kshatriyas are enjoying canalized political leadership.
2. Kshetra was in Madras till 1953, and Madras Panchayat regulations continued to be in force till the 1960 March-April V.P.B. Elections. I continue to use the terms 'President' and 'Vice-President' accordingly, although the Mysore Panchayat Regulations have substituted 'Chairman' and 'Vice-Chairman'.
3. Park & Tinker, 1959, *Leadership & Political Institutions in India*, Chapter 8, pp. 391-469.



age. While I was in the field, no member of a lower caste had any reputation as a Panchayatdar. But I am told that in the past the Kuruba caste had one or two such able persons, who took part with Lingayat elders in deliberations to effect a settlement between Lingayat disputants.

The Lingayat Panchachara seems to have always provided to ensure that this is so. The Kshatriyas also seem to have filled a similar role. In Kshetra today about half a dozen Panchachara men have distinguished themselves as Panchayatdars, while the services of a couple of them are sought by villages in the neighbourhood.

When I was in the field, a group of Panchachara Lingayat Panchayatdars effected a settlement over the partition of a Lingayat joint family. They unsuccessfully tried to bring about a compromise between a washerman and his wife who repeatedly ran away from him. The Kshatriya President also arbitrated between two Lingayats disputing over a field boundary. The two Lingayats involved here were elected to the Panchayat in the 1960 elections and they were both affinally linked to the family of the V.P.B. Vice-President. The tense atmosphere which prevailed among the Lingayats after the elections perhaps compelled the parties to ask the President to adjudicate.

Some of the informal Panchayatdars assured me that the object of adjudication is always to effect a compromise leading to the settlement of the case and not to aggravate the situation. Settlement of cases through the informal Panchayat is one way of preserving the prestige and unity of the village against other villages and the Government. Taking a joint family partition case to the court for instance is not only a waste of money and time, but also lowers the prestige of the village and of its elders who were unable to effect a settlement. It publicises the lack of unity in the village.

Caste councils (*Kula Panchayati*) are also composed of informal Panchayatdars who arbitrate over intracaste and intercaste cases of infringement of customs and traditions. In Kshetra, only Kurubas have held a caste council during the past ten years. Till now, the Kuruba caste council has [not settled even intracaste disputes on its own accord. Panchachara Lingayat elders are always invited to pronounce judgment. During 1956-57, the Lingayat elders in the Kuruba council levied a fine of Rs. 25 on a Kuruba who had dispensed with the ceremonial services of a Lingayat barber and shaved himself.

The same Kuruba family was involved in a dispute with another Kuruba, when the former's flock of sheep had eaten away the pulse crop of the latter. The man with the flock did not listen to the local Lingayat Panchayatdars. A local Brahmin encouraged him to do so, and then went away from Kshetra for some time. Meanwhile, the man who had suffered the loss was encouraged by the Lingayats to take the case to the court. While he was considering whether to lodge a written complaint with the village Headman, the man with the flock brought in a relative of the absent Kshetra Brahmin who lived in a neighbouring village to arbitrate. The Brahmin in collaboration with local Panchayatdars, confirmed the previous judgment. They levied a heavy fine of Rs. 200.00 and used the sum to build a permanent drama stage in the village square.

The local Madigas do not have a caste council. The caste council exists in the form of a formally organized body, insofar as it has a President (*Banakara*) and a Secretary (*Kolkara*). Lacking a caste council, the Madiga elders wield enough power to settle intercaste disputes. Intricate cases whether intercaste or intracaste are again adjudicated by Kshatriyas and Lingayats. All other castes in the village accept the decision of informal Panchayat members if the cases are not taken to court.

The point I want to make here is that people who arbitrate over disputes and take effective decisions are those with personality and leadership. They are also people with enough leisure, wealth, a wide net of kin, and so forth. Those Lingayats who are active political leaders in Kshetra, are also reputable informal Panchayatdars. To some extent this is also true for Kshatriyas. Competition for power is between equals and not between superiors and inferiors. The Kshatriyas try to maintain their superiority as members of one of the Twice-born castes. The Lingayats assert their equality with the Twice-born. The religious dichotomy between the two caste groups is brought down to a working level i.e., it affects day-to-day relations, insofar as they compete with one another for political power. I will analyse the intercaste political relationship later on.

Unlike informal Panchayats, formal Panchayats come under Government control. They are by no means voluntary bodies. Further, where their members do not act informally or in collaboration with informal Panchayatdars, they act as agents of the Government. They can take steps against a man who has committed a

legal offence, and levy a fine on the wrongdoer. They have the right to punish him or they can forward the case to the Government.

### 3. Traditional Panchayat : Nature & Scope

A traditional Panchayat with a village Headman and Accountant is a universal feature of Indian villages. These two posts are hereditary. The village Headman can arbitrate, levy fines and punish a legal offender or can forward the case to the Government. He assists Government officials in the collection of land revenue and he helps the police in the maintenance of law and order in the village.

In Kshetra, a young Lingayat Panchachara is the village Headman. He succeeded to the office in the late 1950's. The traditional Panchayat has declined in importance for the following reasons.

- A. The Headman is young and inexperienced.
- B. It is functioning alongside the Statutory Panchayat which has become popular and powerful.
- C. The Government was considering abolishing the hereditary officer of the Headman and the Accountant altogether, in favour of the statutory Panchayat.

The village Accountant is in charge of revenue collection. In this he is assisted by the Headman and menials such as Talawaris and Madigas. The village Accountants everywhere have been mostly Brahmins, and Kshetra has a Brahmin Accountant. Unlike village menials and sometimes the village Headman, Accountants are almost always literate. They have to be able to maintain accounts, and keep land records. But the British government required a fair degree of literacy even for the village Headman. So the village Headmen in Madras Presidency, and hence in Bellary district, were required to pass a qualifying examination to succeed to the post. This condition has put village Headmen in Bellary district in a better position. For, with the abolition of hereditary posts, the Government was considering the possibility of appointing a qualified village Headman with the Accountant as the Attendant and Secretary respectively of the statutory Panchayat.

There is a widespread belief that many village Headmen and Accountants have encouraged, created and taken sides with factions in the village.<sup>1</sup> Hence the Government move to abolish these

1. McCormack, W.C. 'Mysore Villagers' View of Change in *Economic Development & Culture Change*. Vol. V. No. 3. April, 1957.



hereditary posts was welcomed by the public at large. Public opinion in the Press was against the appointment of the Headman and the Accountant in statutory Panchayats. Some of my informants felt that "this was letting the lions out of their den and bringing trained ones to power through the back door." Since the whole matter was and still is under consideration by the Mysore government I exclude a detailed discussion.

The belief that the village Headman and Accountant foster factionalism in the villages seems to have an element of truth in it. In Kshetra, the Brahmin Accountant has always been on the side of the Kshatriyas, while the Lingayat Headmen have alternated their allegiance between the contending Kshatriya and Lingayat parties in the past. The present Headman was opposed to the Kshatriya President. The President expressed his opposition to the Headman and Accountant serving in a statutory Panchayat and firmly believed that they would only increase factionalism.

#### 4. The Statutory Panchayat : Nature & Scope

A combination of the traditional and statutory Panchayat can be seen working together. In Kshetra, they both existed but functioned separately. Which of the two will gain the upper hand in any particular situation or in general, depends on many other factors. I have already given some of the reasons as to why the traditional system was less important than the statutory one in Kshetra.

The traditional system based on hereditary succession to office rules out the possibility of participation by the general public. The statutory Panchayat, on the other hand, is based on the democratic principle of election to office by a vote of the majority. The power to vote, and the opportunity to run for office, has evoked a response in individuals as well as caste groups. It is not actual equality, but a sense of equality of opportunity, that has made the statutory type of Panchayat a popular one.

With the introduction of the statutory Panchayat, the Lingayats of Kshetra have become increasingly communal minded and Lingayat opposition to the Kshatriyas is increasing to such an extent that a large number of Lingayat families voted against the President's party. But it has also tended to divide caste-groups and individuals seeking selfish ends. The candidates who run for office in the statutory Panchayat do so for many reasons. It has a prestige value and members can wield power and build up a following. Where they are capable of manipulations they can also derive economic benefits such

as acquiring land and house sites from the Government. They get to know more people, especially officials and state politicians, and this enhances their status. The members pay a nominal fee to run for office ; e.g. a caste Hindu must pay a deposit of Rs. 5, a woman Rs. 2.00 and an Untouchable Rs. 2.00. A member in office does not derive any material benefit, i.e. the Government does not pay him any salary. But getting elected to the office will in itself throw open a variety of opportunities which an ambitious individual can exploit to his personal advantage.

The holder of village office in the traditional Panchayat cannot hope to enjoy any of the privileges that a member of a Statutory Panchayat enjoys. Moreover, hereditary village officers are a part of the vast bureaucratic machinery of the state, which makes their position more secure, but less powerful, since they are at the bottom of the hierarchy. As agents of the Government they are concerned with routine duties such as collecting revenue, maintaining land records and keeping the register of births and deaths. They also exercise their power as agents of the Government when the peace of the village is disturbed, i.e. when a fight occurs between members of two castes.

Hereditary officers can neither stop a case nor impose their judgment and settle it locally, if the parties are determined to go to the courts to seek justice. The officers, when they report a case to the Government, do so as agents of the Government rather than as representatives of the villagers. Their status limits their judicial authority. It also differentiates them from statutory Panchayats, the members of which are elected to office by the villagers. Hence they represent the village to the Government.

In Kshetra, under the traditional administrative system, the two dominant castes were always at loggerheads. The village officers were unable to effect a compromise between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats. In fact, the village Headman and Accountant took sides with the contending parties, when tension led to disputes and court litigations which eventually drained the wealth of the village. When the village hereditary officers were unable openly to support one of the contending parties, they exercised their official power by reporting cases of breach of peace in the village to higher officers above them. All the civil and criminal cases which the Kshatriyas fought against the Lingayats were taken to Government courts of law and the traditional Panchayat just forwarded the complaints.



The introduction of a statutory Panchayat in 1949 paved the way for the institutionalized leadership in the village which the Kshatriyas now enjoy. The principle of election has helped to reduce the overt aggression which marked the relationship between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas in the past. Elections have provided a forum for the expression of caste antagonism based on the religious dichotomy between and the differences of economic and political interests of the Kshatriyas and Lingayats.

In my discussion of village politics, I shall be concentrating on the role of the two dominant castes, i.e., the Kshatriyas and the Lingayat Panchacharas. Intercaste political behaviour, as was manifested in the V.P.B. elections, held during March-April, 1960, throws light on the nature of the antagonism between these two groups. It also highlights how the two castes are trying to obtain influence, wield power, and rally around them members of other castes in the village who are dependent on them in a number of ways. Outsiders, both officials and others, also show a keen interest and thus influence outcome of election results. In the face of increasing contacts and easy means of communication which link the village to the wider area, men and ideas have become highly mobile and affect the course of events.

Those villagers who supported the Kshatriyas were dependent on them in some respect or the other. For some it was their mystical belief in the temple cult, for others a ritual post in the temple, and for yet others, the cultivation of temple lands—which are controlled by the Kshatriyas—that prompted them to support the President's party. Official connections and the favours which individuals have been able to obtain from the President, such as the services of Madiga sweepers or of a lamp lighter in the village before electric lights were installed have put them under an obligation to the Kshatriyas.

The Lingayat party, on the other hand, lacks the network of ties which bind the villagers to the Kshatriyas. The buyer-seller relationship clearly did not bring the lower castes to support the Lingayats. Indeed, the Lingayats were divided amongst themselves, so that some of them did not hesitate to overlook kinship ties and supported the President's party. The rift between the Lingayats in the President's party and the Lingayat party was more or less clear cut after the elections. The Lingayat party as a whole was less well organized than the President's party. They also lacked technique



and experience in conducting meeting in the village and soliciting the support of the villagers. All these aspects will emerge below as I discuss the election drama.

A discussion of the election drama will bring out the main factors responsible for the success of the Kshatriyas and the failure of the Lingayats. Lack of unity, a significant feature among the Lingayats has hindered them from dominating village politics. A brief reference to the nature and history of the constitution of the Panchayat Board since 1949 is necessary, insofar as it throws light on the mode of partition. The shifting political alliances among members of some caste groups has until now favoured the political dominance of the Kshatriyas. But this tendency to shift allegiances may also bring about a change in the leadership, provided certain conditions persist unchanged in the Lingayat organization.

### 5. The 1960 Election Drama

The elections of 1960 gave a major opportunity to the two dominant castes to mobilise their forces, i.e. people from other castes in the village, who had aligned themselves with one of the parties and against the other for a variety of motives, although they all had some common objectives such as electing their representatives.

The main objective of the Lingayats is to obtain the Panchayat Board Presidentship. The Panchacharas are a single numerous caste. They are economically dominant. There are quite a few Panchacharas studying in schools and colleges, which in due course will result in the emergence of a group of educated young men. The Veerasaivas as a whole, and the Panchacharas in particular, are the most enterprising and industrious people in Kshetra. Though they have not been able to capture the main political office, i.e. the Presidentship of the V.P.B., there is a sustained drive to capture it.

The antagonism between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas was centred around the temple for a long time. Until recently the Lingayats envied the Kshatriya proprietorship of the temple on economic grounds although this has always been discussed under the cloak of religious interest. The failure of the Lingayats to win a single law suit against the Kshatriyas has compelled the former to accept the vested interest of the Kshatriyas in the temple, so that the economic resources of the temple have nearly ceased to arouse the Lingayats directly. On the other hand, the success of the Kshatriyas in all these law suits has strengthened their position. They have

more strongly identified themselves with the temple and the deity than before, so that they look upon secular political leadership as a right bestowed upon them by the grace of the deity. This faith is a living force. Hence the temple is still a very important agency, through which the Kshatriyas are able to exploit the religious susceptibilities of people to win the elections.

During the 1960 elections religious elements entered the political arena in a subtle way. The Kshatriya President and his party made use of the name of the deity while they canvassed and asked people to vote for them. Their election slogan consisted in shouting 'Elukoti' which, as I have pointed out earlier, is the normal way of invoking the deity.

The President and his party also made a large number of people, especially the Madigas, spend the night prior to the election day in the compound of the President's house, where they were also fed. The following morning, before they were allowed to proceed to the polling booth, the Madigas were smeared with consecrated turmeric powder (bhandar) and made to swear in the name of the deity that they would vote for the President's party. Religious beliefs in this instance, were used to exploit the susceptibilities of ignorant people and to compel them to identify themselves with political parties such as the President's party.

After the elections, the successful President told me that the caste-oriented drive of the opposition Lingayat party was the reason for their failure. In his opinion, the temple and the Kshatriyas stand for liberalism and toleration as opposed to caste conformity. This according to him gives confidence, especially to the members of the lower castes and there will be equity and justice and their interests will not be jeopardized under Kshatriya leadership. How far this is true is beyond the competence of the present discussion. The fact that some members of the Hindu lower castes were openly supporting the opposition Lingayat Party shows that this conviction is not held universally among the lower castes. But all the same the extent to which the temple has acted and is still acting as a powerful political symbol, emerges from this.

Before receiving nominations for candidates in the elections in March 1960, the President and some of the retiring Lingayat members of the Panchayat Board (1957-60), toyed with the idea of nominating members to the Panchayat and sending a report to the Government to that effect. This move was made by those Lingayats who

**CHART 5**  
**Table of Candidates for the Kshetra Panchayat Board Elections 1960<sup>1</sup>**  
**Successful President's Party**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>In his 50's,</i>	<i>President of the VPB from 1949 ; has a good reputation and influence and is younger brother of the trustee of the Kshetra Linga Temple.</i>
1. S.T. Dharmakarta	Kshatriya	President,	In his 50's,	
2. B. Banavi	Lingayat	Vice-Panchachara	In his 60's,	Continued in the office, rich agriculturist, businessman and money-lender.
3. M. Taware	"	President	In his 50's,	Agriculturist, related to the Indi family (5 below).
4. N. Odathi	"	Member	In his 30's,	Married to B. Banavi's daughter, agriculturist, moneylender and ritual leader (Banakara)
5. S. Indi	"	"	In his 40's,	Served on previous Panchayat Board : agriculturist, moneylender ; owns a flour mill and related to B. Banavi.
6. B. G. Gowda	"	"	In his 50's,	Agriculturist, his son is a medical student married to B. Banavi's daughter.
7. D. Pagade	Kuruba	"	In his 40's,	Owens some land and works as a labourer.
8. K. Rami	Madiga	"	In his 30's,	Owens some land and works as a labourer.
9. Gopi	Talawari	"	In her 50's,	A Basavi (has a Lingayat lover), agriculturist and well off.
10. Devi	Washerman	"	In her 40's,	Owens a small grocery shop, married but never lived with her husband. Now mistress of B. Banavi (2 above), a married man.



### Defeated Lingayat Party

1. T. Kanaja	Lingayat Panchachara	In his 50's,	Served as a Panchayat Board Member from 1949-53, agriculturist, owns a grocery shop and a hotel. A man of moderate means with a large family.
2. S. Kadale	"	In his 40's,	Prosperous agriculturist, twice Panchayat Board Member, from 1949-53 and 1957-60.
3. C. G. Odathi	"	In his 30's,	Astute person, agriculturist, served as P. Board Member from 1953-57.
4. M. Odathi	"	In his 50's,	Agriculturist, a man of moderate means and a talented puppet player.
5. M. Badige	"	In his 50's,	A Congress man's agriculturist, served as Panchayat Board Member during 1949-53; always supported the Kshatriyas but has now fallen out with the President.
6. M. Pathare	Panchala	In his 40's,	Goldsmith, opened a grocery shop. Family has a bad reputation among Panchalas.
7. N. Kuntanna	Kuruba	In his 30's,	Rich agriculturist, a large joint family. A member of the family had served as P. Board Member during 1957-60.
8. E. Sonadi	Cheluvadi	In his 40's,	A poor labourer, hardly lived in the village though skilled in house-building.
9. Padma	Lingayat Banajiga	In her 40's,	A married woman. Left grownup sons and a daughter to live with a Panchachara widower with a son and a daughter by his first wife.
10. Gowri	Maratha	In her 40's,	A widow. Poor labourer and mistress of M. Badige, a widower (5 above).

*Notes:* Three members from the hamlets of Ambralli and Tanda were nominated by the people there and they were favourable to both parties in Kshetra and they participated in the Presidential elections.

1. Kshetra was divided into four wards with a total of 1169 voters. In the first and second wards there were twelve contestants, with six from each party i.e., three for each ward. The third and fourth ward; had eight contestants, with four from each party i.e., two for each ward. In each ward the candidates from the Lingayat Party happened to secure both individually and totally less votes than their rivals. Whereas an average difference of twelve votes between two rival candidates was recorded in the first two wards, in the third and fourth wards the average rose to fifty-seven. Thus the Lingayat party as a whole lost in the elections.

believed that to contest the elections on a party basis would be against the public interest, in that it might increase factionalism and even break up families and old friendships. In Kshetra, nearly 60% of the existing marriages (95 out of 159), among the Lingayat Panchachara are intra-village. However, mutual distrust and desire for power prevailed the idea of nominating Panchayat members. So the outcome was that there were two parties which contested the elections.

One was the Kshatriya President's party. The opposition party was led by some Lingayats. The election procedure is that the whole village participates first in electing members, and from among the elected members a President and Vice-President are elected by the members. In April 1960, the President's party won the elections in Kshetra. The Presidential election took place on 19th June, 1960, and S.T. Dharmakarta and B. Banavi were returned unopposed as President and Vice-President. The Tahsildar conducted the general elections while a Special Revenue Inspector, an Untouchable Cheluvadi, came from Hadagalli to conduct the Presidential elections. The following is the list of people who contested the 1960 elections.

I shall now discuss the success of the President's party and the failure of the Lingayat party with reference to the total number of households that supported the former's party as against the latter party.<sup>1</sup> From Chart 5, it is evident that all the Lingayat candidates from the President's party were related to one another, while most of them were rich agriculturists and money lenders. Land and money were put to a variety of uses, in that those who were tenants and creditors of the Lingayat magnates came under pressure to support them in the election. In this way members of other castes in the village supported the President also. On the whole, the members of the President's party were well organized and experienced, having a network of ties which bound members of other castes in the village to them.

The Lingayat party, on the other hand, did not have the advantage of such a network of ties. In fact, none of them are money lenders nor have many of them leased land to the tenants. They are mostly men of moderate means. They did not pool their resources to organize the party ; in a sense they also lacked expe-

1. See p. 223 below for details.

rience. No member from these families is studying in colleges as compared with the Lingayat members of the President's party. They were less well informed of what was going on in 'closed circles' in the village. They committed some blunders in the selection of candidates, so that the concerned members of a particular caste chose to vote for the President's party. All this will emerge more fully when I discuss the details below.

It was T. Kanaja, M. Badige, S. Kadale (all three contested in the elections) and D. Angadi (a retiring member of the V.P.B., a Panchama Pujari who fought in the Horse Case against the Kshatriyas and is today asserting his claim to temple lands in the Bangalore High Court) who formed the nucleus of the opposition party which I call the 'Lingayat Party'.

The members of the Lingayat party explained to me that it was the persuasion of the Vice-President, B. Banavi, who wanted to become the President of the V.P.B., that led them to agree to his proposal of contesting for membership, and later in particular for the Presidentship. But as the nominations were given, B. Banavi left the Lingayat party and joined the President's party. This compelled the Lingayat party to make nominations from their party. D. Angadi, the retiring member did not contest the elections but remained in the background. Midnight meetings between B. Banavi and other Lingayats in the house of a Lingayat schoolmaster, had given publicity among the villagers to the formation of a Lingayat party to oppose the President's party. When B. Banavi left for the President's party, the Lingayat party was obliged to put up candidates, for they felt that failure in the elections would be less humiliating than not contesting them at all.

The selection of candidates in each party, so I was told by a member of the Lingayat party, followed a matching pattern. The President's party used their discretion in selecting people who were favourable to them and leaving out others, even though a particular family had served on the Panchayat during previous years and a candidate from the same family was approved by the caste council. For instance, the late P. Kuntanna, a Kuruba elder, had served as a member in the previous Panchayat. During the 1960 elections a younger member of the same family, N. Kuntanna was approved by the Kuruba caste council. But the President suspected that the family were biased against his party. So he persuaded another Kuruba to join his party. Precisely for this reason, the Lingayat party nominated N. Kuntanna from their party.



Similar discretion was used by the President in selecting a Madiga candidate for the 'reserved seat'. Here the Lingayat party chose to nominate a Cheluvadi from their party. The implications and affects of this particular nomination will be discussed later on. The Lingayat party also nominated a Panchala without consulting the other Panchalas. The family in question had a bad reputation among the Panchalas and its relationship with other members of the caste is not cordial. The nominated person neither approached his caste people nor asked them to vote for him. This was considered by other Panchalas as sheer arrogance on his part and they did not see what purpose would be served by electing him. The net result was that all the Panchalas voted for the President's party. Individual Panchala families were also under an obligation to vote for the President as he had helped them to get jobs in the local unit of the Electricity Department and had conferred on them other favours.

The new Panchayat regulations had laid down that women should be elected. At the village level, the idea that women might become political leaders is still a novelty. Normally the kitchen is the woman's domain although sometimes a few women would also work in the fields. By village standards (sex norms and code of modesty) only men can be political leaders and perform political roles. However, each party was under an obligation to satisfy the Government's requirements. Under these circumstances a married woman with family responsibilities could not be chosen, for she simply would not accept the role.

The President's party, therefore, chose a Talawari Basavi, one Gopi, and a washerwoman, Devi, who though married had never lived with her husband but always took local lovers. At the time B. Banavi was her lover. The choice of women candidates from the Lingayat party was similarly arranged. They chose a Maratha widow, one Gowri, who had taken M. Badige for her lover, and Padma, a Banajiga woman who had left her husband and grown up children in a different quarter of the village, to live with a Panchachara widower, who has a son and a daughter by his first wife.

All the four women candidates had a bad reputation, particularly Devi and Padma who were more notorious than the other two. It was not that they had any overriding good qualities which made them suitable for Panchayat Board membership, but simply that the office was thrust on them. Since they have established reputations as 'daring women' (*Gandubeeri*) they did not hesitate to accept the office, though none of them knew what it meant to be

a member of the Panchayat. In fact in Kshetra, it is not simply membership in the Panchayat Board, but rather the Presidentship that carries all the prestige, status and responsibility of office.

The President, in addition to B. Banavi and S. Indi who had served in the previous Panchayat, nominated three fresh Lingayat Panchachara men to his party. However, all five were connected with one another through kinship and affinal ties. The Lingayat party also included five Lingayats. Friendship rather than kinship and affinal ties held them together. Kinship and affinal ties that existed between members assumed secondary importance in the electoral context. These friends shared the common desire that Lingayats should capture the Presidentship of the statutory Panchayat.

All the ten Lingayat candidates involved in the elections had direct and indirect affinal and kinship connections with one another. Political affiliations cut across ties of caste and kinship. Therefore, I will not give an elaborate genealogy to demonstrate the links. Caste and kinship links did not unite them against the Kshatriyas. Ambition for power and personal economic benefits and such other self-interests weighed heavily in the elections. The election drama could be seen as a struggle for power *within* the Lingayat community. Some Lingayats were shrewd enough to join the President's party where the chances of winning the election were greater and therefore their personal interests more secure.

Since political affiliations cut across ties of caste and kinship, individuals and parties participated in the election drama rather light-heartedly. Except in one case of an unsuccessful Lingayat candidate who viewed the situation seriously and severed his ties with kinsmen and functionaries, party rivalry did not lead to severe inter-personal tensions. After the elections Lingayat elders tried to patch up ruptured social ties among the Lingayats and most of them were pacified.

Although we can talk of the 'election drama', and isolate it from other situations as a relatively self-contained episode, yet antagonism did arise between groups of participants to such an extent that some ill-feeling persisted, particularly among the Lingayats, after the elections. But all my informants, including the Kshatriya President, assured me that these ruptured relations were only a temporary phase and would not lead to the formation of hostile factions.

In support of the above view, they compared Kshetra with the neighbouring village of Kolalu. The retiring President of Kolalu



refused to hand over charge to the newly elected President and filed a suit against the successful party and the Government official who forced open the Panchayat office to enable the new President to assume office. In Kshetra, the prevailing opinion is that parties do not have hostile feelings towards one another to the same degree as elsewhere. But the Kshatriyas do not have much faith in the loyalty of their Lingayat supporters ; and they recognise the possibility that in certain circumstances all Lingayats may unite behind a single leader of their own community. But to maintain himself in office, the President needs Lingayat support ; and it is in the Kshatriya interest to perpetuate internal divisions among the Lingayats. It is, therefore, natural that the President should seek Lingayat support for his party.

Individuals and groups who participated in the election drama canvassed among the villagers pointing out the good they are capable of doing to the people if they were elected to office, and the harm their opponents might do if they (i.e. the latter) were elected.

The symbols used by the parties and their methods of canvassing votes led to a somewhat sharp structuring of parties. This helped to shape the social events that immediately followed the elections. It did not create any major cleavage nor did it lead to any breaches of the peace in the village. The cleavage that already exists between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas is a conscious one. That the lack of unity among the Lingayats accounts for the success of the Kshatriyas is also an accepted fact. Further, a view held by most Lingayats is that because of the V.P.B. Presidentship, the interests of the Kshatriya community are more secure than theirs. The increased contact between the President of the Panchayat Board and Government officials has led the Lingayats to believe that the Kshatriyas are politically dominant with or without Lingayat support.

The Lingayats who are opposed to Kshatriya leadership are striving to unite the Lingayat community, to organize them into a group so that they would be able to dominate the village politically. They have not succeeded so far. But they entertain hopes of success in the future.

This hope is based on an increase in the number of their supporters among Lingayats and other castes in the village. Whereas at the turn of the century, only a couple of Lingayat families were opposed to the Kshatriyas (mainly over the temple proprietorship), today there are about fifty-four Lingayat households (excluding the village schoolmasters, but including two Banajiga and one Jangam



families), who openly support the Lingayat party against the President's party. In addition a Brahmin, a Kshatriya and a Panchala household, a few Kurubas, Barikes, Talawaris and all the Untouchable Cheluvadis openly support the Lingayat party. It is a conviction of the Lingayats that failures are necessary stepping stones to success ; that coming generations of Lingayats will be benefitted by present failures is their firm belief.

A total of ninety households in the village support the Lingayat party. The difference between the number of households that support the President's party and those who support the Lingayat party is vast. Still, the increasing support that the Lingayat party is gaining in the village is giving them hopes that one day they will be able to capture the office of President.

The temple is a stumbling block to the success of the Lingayats. The majority of non-Lingayats, Kurubas, Marathas and Untouchables, especially the Madigas, are under an obligation to support the President's party on religious and economic grounds. Every Kuruba and Maratha household has a Gorava, and this is economically rewarding to them. For this reason they have supported the Kshatriyas, and they can only oppose the Kshatriyas at the risk of endangering their own economic interests.

The Madigas have supported the Kshatriyas for different reasons. The statutory Panchayat has appointed two Madiga sweepers, in addition to the two who are serving under the traditional Panchayat. The President has assisted the Madigas in obtaining house building grants and some land for cultivation from the Government. So the Madigas have been drawn more and more towards the Kshatriyas in recent years. This is one of the reasons why the hereditary relationship (*Kattaya*) between the Madigas and the Lingayat agriculturists is falling into disuse. In addition to this, the religious susceptibilities of the lower castes are also exploited as indicated earlier. These two pressures were brought to bear upon the Madigas. Hence they failed to support the Lingayat party.

The Lingayat party had put up a Cheluvadi candidate to contest the 'reserved seat'. The Madigas objected to this. The Lingayat party tried to pacify the Madigas on the ground that a chance should be given to another Untouchable caste, as Madigas have served on the Panchayat Board since 1949. The Madigas said that since the Lingayats had set up a rival candidate of a caste opposed to and alleged to be lower in status to the Madigas, they were unwilling to

support the Lingayat party. The Madigas, who commanded a large number of votes (eighty-six) advanced the view that they could ill afford to loose a seat in the Panchayat in favour of their rivals. They argued that if the Lingayat party had put forward another Madiga candidate, instead of a Cheluvadi, they would have divided their votes between the two and supported both the parties.

It was too late to withdraw their candidate. So the Lingayats pleaded that the Madigas could still give half of their votes to the Lingayat party and not vote for the Cheluvadi candidate. The Madigas seemed to agree to do this.

The choice of a Cheluvadi candidate by the Lingayat party betrays a lack of insight on the part of the Lingayats. The Cheluvadis and the Madigas generally do not agree about their relative caste status, although not in Kshetra. I have referred to the minor change effected by the Lingayats in their funerary rites by which Madiga ritual services were dispensed with, although the pipers' services were continued. This is probably one of the reasons why the Madigas were unwilling to support the Lingayat party which seemed to favour the Cheluvadis more than the Madigas in other spheres of activity. Further the Cheluvadis are numerically few compared to the size of the Madiga community. The Madigas have the advantage of being numerous and having many votes thereby putting them in a favourable position in the elections so that parties could not simply ignore them.

Initially, both the President's party and the Lingayat party had tried to win over the Madigas. Of the twenty eight Basavis in Kshetra, no less than sixteen are Madigas. The institution of Basavi has been declared illegal by the Governments of Madras and Mysore, and the Government is taking severe measures against the Basavis because they are prostitutes. After giving me some details when I was collecting census data, the Madigas began to fear that I might be a Government agent who would report adversely to the Government on Madiga Basavis and involve them in trouble. This fear of the Madigas was exploited by both the parties before the elections, and both parties told the Madigas that they had intervened and stopped the ethnographer from sending a report to the Government !

The Madigas has stronger motives for supporting the President's party than the Lingayat party. The Government Rest House where I was put up belongs to the Panchayat Board and it is under the control of the President. Since the President had obliged me by giving accommodation there, the Madigas inferred that I must have



obliged the President by not sending a report against the Madiga Basavis to the Government. Although they had seen me in the company of members the Lingayat party, they did not believe that the Lingayats could influence me to the extent of preventing me from sending an unfavourable report to the Government about the Madiga Basavis.

When the Madigas agreed to divide their votes between the two parties, they started begging for money, grain and other donations from the Lingayat party. They commented that the President's party was spending money freely among voters and entertaining them to arrack and meat. "If the Lingayat party wants to win, they should also feed people in the same way as the President's party and not give them merely snacks and tea".

Individual Lingayat candidates gave money to Madigas to purchase both arrack and grain. One of my Lingayat informants told me that he gave Rs. 17 and some fifteen seers of jowar to one Madiga family, and numerous small amounts of money and grain to others. Yet all the Madigas were confined to the compound of the President's house on the day before the election. Thus they voted for the President's party in a body, breaking the understanding they had reached with the Lingayats.<sup>1</sup>

The large private compound of the President's house was chosen to accommodate all the Madigas. This also ensured that the Lingayat party could no longer approach the Madigas to solicit their votes. The outcome was that they all cast their votes in favour of the President's party.

Earlier, the Lingayat party had successfully petitioned the Government against the President's proposal to convert his compound into one of the polling booths. The Lingayats took precautions because they believed that people going to vote in a corner of the President's private house might be afraid to cast their votes in favour of the Lingayats. Accordingly the Tahsildar inspected the spot and appointed the Rest House and the village Common Hall (*Chavadi*) as polling booths. The private compound could be put into use, but the chance of it being utilised to house the Madigas did not occur to the Lingayats until after it happened. But by then it was too late to do anything about it.

1. Opler, M.E. 1959. 'Tradition and Change in a Local Election', in *Leadership & Political Institutions in India*, Ed. Park & Tinker, pp. 137-50. Opler has recorded similar incidents in the election situation in U.P. during December 1955.



After the elections the Madigas as a community were ill-at-ease with the Lingayats. Some of the defeated Lingayat members wanted to teach the Madigas a lesson by reporting to the Government against the Basavis. They even suggested that I should do it for them. For sometime the Madigas were afraid of encountering me in the company of the defeated Lingayat party members. This became apparent when they began to avoid me and were unwilling to give any information about themselves. It was not until the President assured them that there was no harm in giving genealogical information that the Madigas consented to dictate their genealogies.

One of the defeated Lingayat informants told me that he had severed his hereditary ties with a Madiga family which had failed to vote for him after accepting so much money and grain. He told the Madigas to keep away from him until the next elections. The Madiga family showed concern over this. The same Lingayat informant severed his ritual ties with a Jangam's family which had broken their promise to divide their votes between the two Lingayat disciples who were standing as candidates from opposed parties. He also severed his kinship ties with one of his classificatory fathers-in-law who refused to divide the family votes between a friend and a relative both of whom were from opposite parties. Instead he favoured the friend, because he is one of the richest land owners in the village and wields considerable power and influence. Politico-economic interests cut across kinship ties. Hence it is not surprising that the family supported a rich and influential man against a poor relative.

The aim of dividing family and community votes between the two parties was securing as many votes as possible. The Lingayat party members started with a bargain of this kind. The evidence at my disposal suggests that nowhere did the voters voluntarily agree to divide either the family's or the community's votes between the two parties with a view to maintaining good relationships with them. They were cajoled by members of the Lingayat party to divide their votes. The outcome was favourable to the Lingayat party.

The ballot is theoretically secret and Lingayat party members wanted to secure as many votes as they could by asking people to divide their family's and community's votes. For instance they asked the Madigas to divide their community votes. Had the Madigas acted according to their promise, forty-three of them would have gone with a member of the Lingayat party to the polling booth. The voters enter the booth while the candidate waits outside. But

once the voters are inside the booth, they are at liberty to change their minds and vote for any one instead of for the promised candidate. There is no way of knowing whom they voted for, except by relying upon what they say. Members of the Lingayat party also asked the Panchayats in vain to divide their community's votes between the two parties. In the elections tension and competition were increased as a result of this.

During the elections the Lingayat party made use of one of the favourite parables of Vinoba Bhave when they canvassed in the village for votes. According to the parable there was a very poor man in a certain village. He begged the land owners to lease him two acres of land for cultivation. Most of the village landlords turned him down. One landlord took pity on him in the end and gave him two acres of poor soil. The poor man devoted himself to cultivation and was able to raise good crops. This opened the eyes of the other landlords in the village. So the following year people rushed to lease their land to the poor man. "Likewise", said the Lingayats, "we are poor and inexperienced. Elect us to office, give us a chance to serve and see what we can do for you. We are not rich elephant-and-horse owners, but the poor living in grass huts." The 'elephant' and the 'horse' were among the symbols of the President's party.

The President's party had an elephant, a horse, a cow and a flower as its symbols, whereas the Lingayat party had a cart wheel, an umbrella, an open hand and a pair of scales. The reference to the party symbols made by the Lingayat party while narrating the parable angered the President's party. They interpreted the symbolism literally, and hence abused the symbols of the Lingayat party.

The President's party derided the Lingayat party symbols. They said that they stood for a broken cart wheel (*muruku chakra*), a torn umbrella (*haruku kode*), a hand infected with leucoderma (*tonnugai*), and a scale which could be turned upside down (*tajiviji takkadi*) implying thereby that business people are swindlers. "Swindling, in fact, is the trader's art."<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, the elephant, the horse and the cow are animals of substantial value which can be owned only by people of substantial wealth. The value of the objects was equated with men of means. A man with means was assumed to have a weighty personality, commanding prestige. The value of an umbrella or a pair of scales

1. Bailey, F.G. 1957, Op. Cit., p. 135.

is very little compared to that of an elephant or a cow. Hence the prestige of people with only an umbrella or a pair of scales is correspondingly low.<sup>1</sup>

The cow is not merely a sacred animal in India but is regarded as Gomata (cow, the mother), the source of bullock power. India is a predominantly agricultural country where bullocks are used to draw the plough. Nothing captures the imagination of the villagers so much as a cow or a pair of bullocks, both of which are venerated. The use of the cow or of a pair of bullocks as election symbols—the cow is one of the President's party's symbols—was ideologically nearer to the common viewpoint than the symbols of the other party.

Earning a living by business—through the use of scales—makes a peasant suspect that one needs to tell lies and handle the scales skillfully to deceive customers. Hence business is not for honest people. To put it in another way, honest people never prosper in business. The symbol of scales used by the Lingayat party undoubtedly failed to impress the people. The symbols that the parties used in the election undoubtedly influenced the result of the election, for they were evaluated within the traditional frame of reference.

The elephant, horse, cow and flower—the President's party's symbols—have all traditional values and could be linked with high caste status. The elephant and the horse stand for power, while the Kshatriyas traditionally are a ruling and warrior caste. The cow and the flower are sacred objects in Hinduism. The cow is variously interpreted as Gomata (cow, the mother) and Kamadhenu (giver of all things desired by men) and is worshipped by all high caste Hindus including the Veerasaivas. Flowers have a ritual value and are indispensable on all religious occasions.

The cart wheel, the umbrella, the open hand and the scales, the symbols of the Lingayat party, in contrast to the symbols of the President's party do not carry implications of traditional value. The cart wheel is connected with agriculture and agriculturists and is associated with less well-to-do caste status. The umbrella which protects one from sun and rain is not necessarily a symbol of richness

1. Epstein, A.L., 1958, *Politics in an Urban African Community*, in Chapter IV, while writing on the election of a chairman to the trade union narrates the interpretation of election symbols. The four ballot boxes painted black, white, red and green according to one of the voters, stood respectively for a person with no brains, a peace loving Christian, a strong man as hot as fire, and a man as young as the green leaves c.f., election symbols in Kshetra.



either. An open hand as interpreted by one of my informants may stand for Righteousness (*Dharmada Kai*). It can equally mean a begging hand or a hand out-stretched to receive alms from others. The scales stand as much for justice and fair dealing as for swindling in business.<sup>1</sup>

I am unable to explain the grounds on which the party symbols were chosen in Kshetra. But what emerges is that the President's party seems to have calculated on appealing to traditional values in much the same way as the Indian Congress Party does at a higher level. Neither the President nor any member of his party are members of the Congress organization. The local parties do not identify themselves with political parties at higher levels such as the Congress or the Praja Socialist Party. They do not have a body of rules or a programme as the state political parties have. This is evident from the Taluk Board elections held in October 1960, and General Elections held in February 1962. In the Taluk Board elections a Lingayat Congress candidate was elected, while in the General Elections a Lingayat candidate of the Praja Socialist Party was elected.

The symbols used by the Lingayat party in a sense stood for a new set of economic values. In fact this might be conceived as a logical development of Veerasaiva philosophy which advocated that a vocation was very essential to earning a living. The Lingayat party did not succeed against the President's party, partly because of the conflict between traditional values and the emergent economic and political ideas of democracy. India is a tradition-oriented society and tradition has a stranglehold over the minds of men. Appeals in the name of a deity and symbols like a cow or a pair of bullocks have traditional value and people could understand and evaluate them very easily. But the use of a pair of scales as a symbol failed to impress the people.

A rational economic pursuit such as trade is foreign to Indian tradition or at best such trading as developed in India—Gujarat, Punjab and elsewhere—did not lead to the development of a rational capitalism. The view that trading debases human nature, insofar as traders have to tell lies and deceive people, has a firm hold on the minds of many in India. Weber clearly saw why 'rational capitalism' failed to develop in India. The values attached to traditional institutions such as caste, traditional modes of authority

1. Prof. Srinivas tells me that scales are an old caste symbol of the Cheluvadis insofar as a replica of the scales are found on the caste-ladle carried by them.

and traditional ways of living, guided by a set of rules which have come down from immemorial times, prevail over new sets of values which are coming to India partly from within and partly from contact with the outside world. In the struggle between the old and the new, tradition seems to subsume the new. This emerges clearly from the situation in Kshetra. Other studies in different parts of India have more or less led to the same conclusion.<sup>1</sup>

I cite the following few instances to show how the result of the election left more evident traces of this among the Lingayats themselves than between Lingayats and Kshatriyas.<sup>2</sup> Members of Lingayat families divided their votes between the two candidates contesting on behalf of different parties. They preferred one party to another for various reasons. After the elections, the wives of the successful Lingayat contestants of the President's party, taunted and abused the unsuccessful Lingayat men who had opposed their husbands. Also the teachers in the local school, who were all Veerasaivas, and who otherwise were sympathisers of the Lingayat party, were abused, mocked at and subjected to the threat that members in office would see that they were immediately transferred from Kshetra.<sup>3</sup>

The antagonism between the successful and defeated leaders was nowhere displayed more clearly than at a wedding during May 1960, just one month after the elections in the village. X, a Lingayat youth in his 20's was compelled by his elders and some of the newly-elected Lingayat members of the Panchayat Board, to marry his five-year-old niece at the time of the wedding of his elder brother. Kshatriya youths advised X in my presence that it was illegal and very risky from a personal view point, and persuaded X to give it up. It was immediately concluded that this was connected with the Lingayat party as X's family had supported the President's party during the elections.

Among Lingayats, the ritual leader of the group (Banakara) must give his formal consent to arrange and celebrate a wedding.

1. Park & Tinker Ed. 1959. Op. Cit., pp. 395-469. Epstein, T.S. 1962. Op. Cit., pp. 114-53, 276-92.
2. The members of a sub-caste who reside in a village generally come together when a wedding, funeral, birth or festival occurs. Such occasions calling for close cooperation and interaction promote solidarity as well as conflict. Such close bonds do not exist, however, between two different sub-castes or castes such as the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas in Kshetra.
3. Most of the teachers were away on election duty in other villages. Even at the time of writing the book no teacher has been transferred from Kshetra.

Here the Banakara had been successful in the recent elections. Hence he readily agreed. When X told his elders and people interested in his wedding that he had been advised against it, people took sides on the basis of their political affiliations. They were determined to celebrate the marriage to offer a challenge to the Lingayat party.

It so happened that members of the Lingayat party had gathered for a tea party given by a Barike youth who had got married early in April 1960. X's mother took it amiss, and accused them of having gathered there to write a petition to the Government. It was news to members of the opposition party. The Vice-President and the Banakara (B. Banavi and N. Odathi), who were also father-in-law and son-in-law, loudly announced that they would see what others in the village could do. They financed the wedding and they were the real leaders in the affair. Yet when I put this matter before the V.P.B. President, he denied that there were party pressures involved.

The President also inveighed against the 'Sarda Act', which prohibits child marriage. The Sarda Act, passed well over three decades ago by the Government—Madras constituted part of British India, while Kshetra was in Madras Presidency till 1953—is still disregarded by the villagers in the Presidency. It prohibits the marriage of girls and boys below the age of 14 and 18 years respectively. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 has raised the marriageable age of girls to 15 years.

In the words of the President, "As all people should encourage a good thing like celebrating a wedding, why should anyone complain to the Government? If out of enmity someone is prepared to inform the Government, the Act does not encourage the informer. A man lodging the information has to pay a deposit of Rs. 100. He will get back his deposit only if the case is proved. But in most cases it happens that such cases are disapproved. Hence even a man's enemies would be reluctant to take advantage of the Act." Thus the President lectured on the ineffectiveness of many Acts in the lives of the villagers.

The tea party arranged by the Barike youth, unfolded yet another aspect of the bad-relationship prevailing among the Lingayats themselves. Y, a Lingayat, now a college student, and a consistent supporter of the President's party, came and told the Kshatriya youths almost in a complaining tone, "Look, N. Kalli, had arranged



a tea party in honour of the people of the Lingayat party. I walked three or four times in front of his house. N. Kalli did not even cast a glance at me, or say 'hallo' to me. We all worked hard on his behalf during his wedding, but today he is giving a grand party to others."

N. Kalli is a popular tailor, has a small cloth shop, with customers from all castes. His marriage took place in April when the election campaign in the village had divided the people against each other. Some of the Lingayat members of the President's party volunteered to help and work on behalf of N. Kalli during the wedding when extra hands were needed for various activities. Members of the President's party who had helped N. Kalli were all fed at the wedding feast. N. Kalli was wise enough to give tea exclusively to the members of the Lingayat party, to reaffirm the fact that he was still their supporter and that he needed them. This case was outlined to me by a local teacher.

Before the elections took place in April, B. Banavi saw that the services of H, a temporary part-time clerk in the V.P.B. were dispensed with. B. Banavi who joined the President's party suspected H of giving election information regarding the plans and programmes of the President's party to the Lingayat party. Therefore he urged the President to remove him from office. H, a Lingayat from a neighbouring township, had been absent from Kshetra for a long time owing to ill-health. When he returned to Kshetra in February 1960, he became a boarder in T. Kanaja's hotel. This link was considered undesirable enough. In addition outside office hours H was constantly seen in the company of Lingayat party members. This gave rise to suspicion and allegations to the effect that he was passing on election information to the Lingayat party. He was dismissed from service in April. I suspect they probably mentioned his long absence and prolonged illness in the order of dismissal.

At the beginning of my field-work, many Lingayat youths, and the son of the Vice-President of the V.P.B. a matriculate, often used to emphasize the importance of the need for a change of political leadership in the village. Credit for all village improvements, such as getting electricity, a Rest House, a Post Office, and a grant for a school building, was given exclusively to the Government, and not at all to the President, who had worked hard and ably to get them sanctioned. Yet the same youth, like his father, changed his opinion and shifted his allegiance to the President's party during

the elections. He was one of the more important leaders canvassing for the party. "This is politics (*rajakeeyave heege*)," was his reply to the members of the Lingayat party who reminded him of his past criticism of the President. His father continued as Vice-President for the second time. To go back to the date of formation of the V.P.B. in 1949, B. Banavi was not in the picture at all.

## 6. The History of the Statutory Panchayat

Before describing the history of the statutory Panchayat in Kshetra, I present a table of membership of the V.P.B. from 1949 to 1960.

### CHART VI

#### The Table of Membership of the V.P.B. from 1949-60

Years	Name	Caste	Office
1949-53	1. S.T. Dharma-karta,	Kshatriya	President,
	2. B. Lingapuje, L. Panchachara		Vice-President, in his 50's Widower, agriculturist and a moneylender.
	3. L.G.R. Gowda,	"	Member, Agriculturist in his 50's.
	4. S. Kadale,	"	"
	5. P. Tavare,	"	" Agriculturist, in his 50's.
	6. T. Kanaja,	"	"
	7. B. Badige,	"	"
	8. N. Kuranna,	Madiga	" Landless labourer, in his 60's.
1953-57	1. S.T. Dharma-karta,	Kshatriya	President.
	2. B. Lingapuje, L. Panchachara		Vice-President.
	3. B. Tavare,	"	Member, Agriculturist, trader in his 50's.
	4. C.G. Odathi,	"	"

Years	Name	Caste	Member	Office
	5. C.R. Nadig,	Brahmin	Member	Agriculturist in his 45's.
	6. B. Pagada,	Kuruba	„	Agriculturist in his 45's.
	7. B. Gadda,	Madiga	„	Landless labourer his 40's,
1957-60	1. S.T. Dharma-karta,	Kshatriya	President.	
	2. B. Banavi,	L. Panchachara	Vice-President	
	3. S. Kadale,	„	Member,	
	4. D. Angadi,	„	„	
	5. S. Indi,	„	„	
	6. P. Kuntanna,	Kuruba	„	Agriculturist in his 60's well-to-do family.
	7. B. Gadda,	Madiga	„	

In 1949 the village statutory Panchayat came into existence for the first time. Kshetra was then in Madras Presidency. The V.P.B. formation was on the basis of the 1920 Act of District and Local Board of the Madras Government. According to the Act, a village with a population of less than two thousand, but more than one thousand and five hundred, could have a Panchayat Board consisting of eight members. Accordingly Kshetra, with a population of 1,816 in 1949, had eight members on its Panchayat Board. The Panchayat as such was under the control of the District Collector. The role of the Panchayat consists in working for the improvement of the village. It is a welfare body with some financial resources and judicial power.

The Kshetra V.P.B. had six Lingayat Panchachara members, a Kshatriya and a Madiga. There was no election of members. By mutual consent, the village elders nominated the members. But an election took place to select a President and Vice-President. Most Lingayat informants recalled the time when they deceived one of their own men and allowed the political leadership to pass into the hands of the Kshatriyas. Since then they have not been able to recover it.



Informants told me that the late L. G. P. Gowda, was a popular man, able, educated, honest, active and with official contacts, since he was the secretary of the local food depot. Hence he stood a good chance of winning the election and becoming the President. But M. Badige and B. Lingapuje changed their allegiance and associated themselves with S. T. Dharmakarta. They could not give me any reason why they did so. M. Badige and his family had always been on the side of the Kshatriyas till recently. B. Lingapuje was probably tempted to change his allegiance, so that he would stand a chance of becoming Vice-President. He secured the uncontested Vice-Presidency. With this change the party was divided into two groups of about equal strength.

Just a day prior to the election, S. Kadale chose to leave the village for some other place and not to cast his vote for either candidate. He could not have voted for the Kshatriyas as his family was still fighting a case in the court against them. But the reasons for his not wanting to support a Lingayat candidate needs explanation.

It was L.G.P. Gowda's collaterals who had supported the Kshatriyas against B. Kadale. In 1931, B. Kadale fell out with the Kshatriyas when they asked for the release of the pledged lands. Some Lingayats wanted to mediate. B. Kadale deliberately insulted them by refusing to attend a Panchayat meeting convened by them. The Lingayats who were already envious of B. Kadale's riches, upon being insulted by him gave moral and financial support to the Kshatriyas to take the case to the court. Hence the Kadale family could not forget that less than two decades ago L.G.P. Gowda's collaterals were responsible for setting the Kshatriyas against them. So S. Kadale, son of B. Kadale, left the village at his father's instructions to avoid participating in electing the President. With this, the Kshatriya party gained majority support.

L.G.P. Gowda was left with only the support of P. Tavare and T. Kanaja. When the actual elections took place, the election officer, a minor Government official, voted in favour of S.T. Dharmakarta who was supported by B. Lingapuje, M. Badige, and N. Kuranna. Thus S.T. Dharmakarta became President by a clear majority. B. Lingapuje became Vice-President without being opposed.

Lingayat informants in summing up said that this was a blow to L.G.P. Gowda's aspirations. He took it as a serious humiliation and for the next two years never showed himself in the village. He

finally committed suicide before the second elections to the V.P.B. took place in 1953. It was inferred that he did not want to live any longer and see Kshatriyas ruling over the Lingayats. However, he was also suffering from tuberculosis when he committed suicide.

The Panchayat Amendment Act was passed by the Government of Madras in 1951. According to this, election of members to the village Panchayat was by show of hands and not through secret ballot. A member could not become a President. The entire village participated in electing members as well as the President, and the President was not responsible to the Members. Members were required to obtain the permission of the Inspector of Local Boards in Madras, before they might oppose the President.

In Kshetra, the second Panchayat consisted of six members, including the Vice-President. B. Lingapuje continued as Vice-President. There was a Brahmin, a Kuruba and a Madiga along with three Lingayat Panchachara members. In accordance with the Government Act, members serving on the Panchayat could not contest for the Presidentship. The Presidential election was separate, and the whole village participated in it. S.T. Dharmakarta and B. Banavi contested for the Presidentship and S.T. Dharmakarta won in the elections. However Lingayat informants told me that B. Banavi failed because he could not count the hands properly and was unable to check the people who lifted both hands in support of S.T. Dharmakarta.

The Act provided a constitutional safeguard to the village Panchayat Board President against the members. Since the President was elected by the villagers, and not from among the members and by the members, he was independent of the members. The President in his official capacity was under the direct control of the District Collector and the Inspector of Local Boards in Madras. Neither members of the Panchayat nor of the District Board could take action against the President without first getting permission to do so from the Inspector of Local Boards in Madras. The provisions of the Act as well as the actual distance—some five hundred and odd miles—from Kshetra to Madras, and the complicated process involved in taking any steps against the President, were sufficient to ensure the President's complete independence.

When B. Banavi failed in the Presidential elections some tension was created in the village. There was also some general confusion as Bellary district was made over to Mysore state shortly after this.



But the Mysore Government allowed the Madras Panchayat rules and regulations to continue till 1960.

The local tension was over a washerwoman whom B. Lingapuje had kept as his mistress for some time. B. Banavi, who was already a magnate, a land owner, a wholesale dealer in cotton and groundnuts, and above all a moneylender alienated the washerwoman's affections from B. Lingapuje. Thus deprived, B. Lingapuje today is slightly deranged mentally. He seldom talks to anyone in the village, and always sits in the village Common Hall (Chavadi) wearing dark glasses. When he opens his mouth, it is only to heap abuse upon the people of the village. The villagers describe him as 'Ganapathi': he sits with crossed legs and folded hands and keeps absolutely mum.

B. Banavi is a married man with a large family of two sons and six daughters and was negotiating to marry the daughter of one of his daughters to his second son. B. Lingapuje is a middle-aged widower in his early 50's with a daughter and a son. B. Banavi is well in his 60's, but his relationship with his washerwoman mistress is a very steady one. They were both elected to the Panchayat Board in the 1960 elections. Village youths describe B. Banavi as a lusty man, but because he is rich no one criticises him openly.

B. Banavi's failure to become President of the V.P.B. did not discourage him. The result was that the President recognized him and took him into his confidence by 1956. When the third Panchayat elections took place in early 1957, it seems the President agreed to whatever B. Banavi decided. This time also election to office was by a show of hands. There was a Madiga, a Kuruba and four Lingayat Panchachara members, including the Vice-President. B. Banavi became the Vice-President and agreed that S.T. Dharmakarta should continue as President.

The selection of candidates was based on mutual consent, and hence there was no tension between people and parties. At the beginning of my field work, B. Banavi's son used to tell me that S.T. Dharmakarta would not have been President but for his father's consent. It seems S.T. Dharmakarta pleaded with B. Banavi to consent to his continuance as President for one more term and promised to relinquish his office in favour of B. Banavi in the following elections. If he does not do so this time the youth used to swear, "Let S.T. Dharmakarta try to win in the 1960 elections and become President: It is long overdue that he should cease to be President."



The preparations for the 1960 elections and B. Banavi's ambition to become President led him to confer with the Lingayat party in the beginning. But when the party was getting ready to back him, he defected and joined the President's party and contested against the Lingayat party. He would not give any definite reasons why he changed his mind. But his son did explain it in terms of the political ethos.

It appears to me that B. Banavi measured the strength of the Lingayat party and foresaw that they could not win in the election. Further, even if they had won, there would have been keen competition as to who should become the President. There would have been two active young people, S. Kadale and T. Kanaja, who would have contested for office against B. Banavi. Members of the Lingayat party reflected on this issue only after their defeat in the elections. They were completely oblivious as to who was better fitted to fill the Presidentship, as two people had different capacities for heading the party. S. Kadale was rich but stingy and not very sociable. In contrast T. Kanaja was active and high by sociable, and in a sense able to occupy the post of President, though not rich. It was probably for these reasons that B. Banavi chose to go back to the President's party, where he could be assured of at least the Vice-Presidentship.

The Lingayat party realised that had they won the elections, they would still have been faced with the difficulty of electing the President, and the party would then have split. They were contented in a sense because S.T. Dharmakarta continued in the office uncontested. The Lingayats know that they do not have a single undisputed leader among them who could lead them intelligently.

Their lack of a leader is associated with competition and disunity among themselves. The Lingayat party members were happy that S.T. Dharmakarta, and not B. Banavi became President. A friend of B. Banavi from the neighbouring village told me, that "the time is not ripe yet for the Lingayats of Kshetra to become Presidents. There are certain things which only a man of S.T. Dharmakarta's calibre can do for the village. At the moment there is no one among the Lingayats. So let S.T. Dharmakarta continue as President for the good of the people and the village."

A glance at the names of the Lingayat leaders of the President's party show that four out of the five Lingayats had served as members of the Panchayat at some time or the other. But they were all unanimous that membership was meaningless. No meetings were

convened and none of the members were consulted by the President on any issue. The President took the entire responsibility on himself, resolved what matters he thought fit and simply sent the minute book for members' signatures. The view that the members and the President never conferred to decide on any important matter was confirmed by Panchayat Board Bill Collector, who is a paternal cousin of the President. He said, "formally, the meeting should be held every month. There is no necessity to hold the meeting, since the President does everything by himself. No member is 'intelligent' enough to be critical and so there is no need for discussion. After all the V.P.B. is not like the State Assembly, nor are its members like the legislators. It is enough that the President decides what is needed for the good of all in the village."

The President is independent and somewhat autocratic. This is evident from his own statements. After giving me the details about the Panchayat Board, especially about its revenue<sup>1</sup> resources and savings, he said, "for the first time I have given these details to you. I don't give such detailed information even to officers." Implicit in this statement is that the V.P.B. members are kept ignorant of the most important item in the village administration, namely, the accounts.

It is precisely this 'decision making by a single man for the good of all in the village' which the Lingayats feel the office of the President entails. They say that the office of the President has strengthened the Kshatriya power in the village, so that the President works to enhance the prestige and status of the Kshatriyas and the temple, and not for the good of all.<sup>1</sup> They see the role of the temple in secular politics and say that as long as the trusteeship of the temple and the Presidentship of the Panchayat are held by members of a single caste, in this case by two brothers, Lingayats have few chances of success.

The temple continues to be a potent factor in the lives of most people because it appeals to their religious susceptibilities. Secular political behaviour is in turn influenced by the temple cult and its

1. The Village Panchayat Board has an annual income of nearly Rs. 10,000 of which as much as Rs. 6,000 comes from the temple and festivals connected with the temple. The rest of the amount comes from house tax, vehicle, ferry, damages and offensive license fees. Between 1949 and 1960, according to the V.P.B. accounts Rs. 20,000 had been saved apart from all the expenses it had met in connection with improvement works in the village such as getting electricity, repairing roads, building a Rest House and so forth.



religious implications. This makes the situation complex and difficult for the Lingayat party. If the two could be divorced, then the Lingayats might hope to dominate village politics. They are working hard to bring about this.

It seems that the presence and the role of the Kshatriyas in the village is a necessity. The Lingayats are divided amongst themselves. The cleavage runs along different sub-castes among them and is supported by difference in customs and occupations (see the chapter on Lingayat sectarianism). Even within a sub-caste economic and political expediency have always tempted individual families to support the Kshatriyas against members of their own caste. This is evident from the elections to the V.P.B. during 1960. Whereas the Kshatriyas have the advantage of being one family, the Lingayats are of many families who so far have not been able to unite against the Kshatriyas despite their superior numbers and economic resources.

The anti-Kshatriya Lingayat party rationalizes the presence of the temple and the influence it exerts over men's minds in the village. They exaggerate it and connect it with the political dominance of the Kshatriyas. Even if the temple ceased to influence people's politics it would be hoping in vain to think that a Lingayat would succeed to the office of the President. The Lingayat community, which has not produced a single undisputed leader so far, naturally seeks leaders among the Kshatriyas. And whoever fills the role of a leader is admired as well as blamed. The Kshatriya political role is like the role of the 'strangers' in the *Village on the Border* described by Frankenberg. By assuming this role the Kshatriyas help to preserve and represent the unity of the village, which is otherwise threatened by antagonism and rivalry within the Lingayat caste groups.

A further three out of the four members of the Lingayat party—M. Badige, T. Kanaja and S. Kadale—have personal reasons for opposing the President. M. Badige explained to me how the President 'pinches the child and rocks the cradle'. By this he meant, that the President is increasingly playing one Lingayat off against another through his influence and official contacts.

I was told that B. Banavi was encouraged to attempt to replace M. Badige as the hereditary trustee of the local Hanuman temple around 1956. The President seems to have assured B. Banavi of his help and influence in official circles. Since M. Badige was a friend of the Kshatriyas, the President encouraged him to fight against



B. Banavi to retain his prerogatives. Both the Lingayats went to court after getting the necessary assurances from the President. They both spent a lot of money over this case. However, when it became necessary for M. Badige to go for the case to so distant a place as Vishakapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, the President failed to accompany him as had been previously agreed. M. Badige was able to win and the Government recognized him as the lawful trustee.

The two Lingayats then realized how they had been outwitted by the Kshatriya President over the trusteeship of the temple. It seems that B. Banavi confessed later on that it was the President who set him to work against M. Badige, while he himself did not have any interest in becoming a trustee (*'Yarige bekagitho maharaya, edella avana kelasa'*). Around 1958, M. Badige fell out with S.T. Dharmakarta. So he is opposed to the President and not to the other Kshatriyas.

One A. Ulli was cultivating the lands belonging to the local Sringeri Mutt. He did not pay the lease amount for a number of years. So the Mutt agent—a Brahmin from another village—entrusted S.T. Dharmakarta with the task of taking charge of the lands and collect dues from A. Ulli. Still A. Ulli was unable to pay. So T. Kanaja was offered the lands.

A. Ulli and T. Kanaja have married close cousins from the same lineage. After paying the stipulated amount to the Mutt agent through the President, T. Kanaja went to plough the fields. A. Ulli objected and would not allow T. Kanaja to plough them. Since A. Ulli had been cultivating the fields for nearly eighteen years, he was advised by the President to go to court against T. Kanaja. Accordingly, A. Ulli filed a suit against T. Kanaja in the court of the Tahsildar at Hadagalli in 1958-59. Both the parties explained to me that they have spent more than one thousand rupees and blamed each other for this.

The Tahsildar, a Lingayat Banajiga, explained to me how at the very beginning he had advised both T. Kanaja and A. Ulli to divide the land and cultivate half of it. He emphasized the ties of caste and kinship between them and wanted them to compromise, so that they could share the land between them, instead of fighting and letting it go to a third party, a Kshatriya or a Brahmin. In this attempt, the Tahsildar shared an official secret with T. Kanaja and A. Ulli. He explained to them that, sooner or later, the Government would take possession of all inam lands. Then the two

Lingayat tenants would stand a good chance of getting the land for themselves. But the parties could not bring themselves to agree to a compromise.

T. Kanaja was described as obstinate and stupid. In the opinion of the Tahsildar, T. Kanaja, who owns a hotel, has built up a party of rogues (*goondas*) by means of his catering business. He did not approve of T. Kanaja's contesting against the Kshatriya President in the elections. T. Kanaja, however, said that the Tahsildar's mind has been 'poisoned' against him by the President. In the middle of 1960, A. Ulli withdrew his suit against T. Kanaja. But the President filed a new suit, saying that he had not been consulted as a middleman since the lands were in his charge. Hence the case was still in progress when I left the field in early October.

The point that there is discord between S. Kadale and the President has a deeper significance. The Kadale family's disputes with the Kshatriyas started in 1932 and in the chapter on temple politics, I have discussed the discord at some length. Hence S. Kadale's opposition to the President is better founded and more deep rooted than that of T. Kanaja's and M. Badige's. But S. Kadale also had an immediate reason to oppose the President.

Two Lingayats, S. Indi and S. Kadale, had put in applications to install flour mills once Kshetra received electricity. This had also been sanctioned by the Electricity Department. But somehow, when the formal switching on of electric lights was done by the Deputy Commissioner in February, 1960, only S. Indi was allowed to open his flour mill. S. Kadale and party explained to me that the President had not forwarded S. Kadale's application to the Government for a grant of a licence to open the flour mill. The President, however, said that the Electricity Department is not prepared to supply the current.

Many Lingayat informants pointed out that S. Kadale and S. Indi were being played against each other by the President. But since S. Indi is in the President's party he is favoured by the President. However, they also speculated that sooner or later S. Kadale would succeed in getting permission to start his flour mill. One flour mill in the village would mean a monopoly, and hence higher charges for 'milling' the grain. To ensure competition, which will keep down the 'milling' charges, a second mill was necessary. S. Kadale succeeded in opening his mill in late August, 1960.

## 7. Village and State Government

State Government officials are playing an increasingly important role in village administration. In Kshetra, the administration of the temple also comes under Government control. From this springs the importance of the role of the temple in secular politics.

When the village had only its traditional Panchayat and was in Madras Presidency, the villagers say that they did not have much contact with Government officials. The city of Madras, the capital, was very far from Kshetra. The officials, such as the District Collector and Assistant Collector, who visited Kshetra used to be Europeans, Tamilians and Andhras. A Kannada officer was rare. Most of these officers used to camp near the river, where the village Headman, Accountant and menials would attend them. Villagers had no opportunity to meet or speak to the officers. Language, culture and official status were barriers between the villagers and the officers in British India. Once the officer finished his official work, he never stayed to go round the village.

India became independent in 1947 and villages began to have statutory Panchayats in the following years. Now the villagers' contact with the officials increased. Government became not merely tax collecting body but an agency interested in the material, moral, social and cultural welfare of the people. State officers and politicians began to visit the villages frequently. They did not camp away from the village but stayed in the village, often among villagers. The officers did not confine their interest merely to official work but often advised the villagers on lines which they thought would help them. Villagers were able to obtain interviews and speak to the officers personally.

Bellary district was merged with Mysore state in 1953. With the subsequent formation of the new Mysore state in 1956, the district came to be in the centre of the state. Most of the officers are now Kannada speaking people. The language and culture barrier which separated the Tamil and Telugu officers from Kannadigas has been removed. A first step towards this understanding came about in Kshetra when a Home Minister of Mysore visited the village. He witnessed and sanctioned the revival of the 'miracle play' by the Kanchaveeras, whereas the Madras Government had stopped it for a long time.

That our officials do not keep to a time-schedule is common knowledge. Villagers say that this is so, "because our officials fulfil



too many duties on their way to a particular village." Wayside villagers stop them and talk to them. Indian officials in the Democratic set-up cannot avoid this. Hence officers have no time-schedule.

A certain Chief Minister of the state who was scheduled to visit Kshetra one afternoon came at about 1.30 a.m. the following morning. The villagers waited till midnight, then went home, finished their dinner and slept. When the Minister arrived, there was no one to receive him. He made his way to the temple. There was not even enough food for him and his party and it was all cold. But the Minister ate what was left and went to bed. Villagers appreciate informality of behaviour in officers, but they also comment upon their irregularity.

When I was in the field, the villagers waited a whole afternoon for the arrival of the Assistant Collector. They gave a grand welcome to the Assistant Collector's cook who had come earlier in the daily bus. As the bus stopped in front of the Rest House, the village pipers started playing loud music to welcome him, while the President and others rushed to receive him. The cook told them that the officer would soon be here in his car. Disappointed by their mistake, the villagers waited another two hours, but the officer did not arrive. They went home to eat their dinner. The officer quietly arrived about 10.30 P.M. There was only the Bill Collector to receive him.

In contrast to the above, European officers, villagers say appreciatively, kept their time-schedule, correct to the second. They often timed their arrival between breakfast and lunch or lunch and dinner. They finished their work on schedule and returned without delay to the headquarters. So the villagers were neither kept waiting to receive them nor needed to spend money to feed them. Villagers emphasize the difference between the formal behaviour of British officers, many of whom perhaps did not know Kannada, and the informal behaviour of Indian officers and connect it with keeping or not keeping a time-schedule.

The Kshatriyas always have had a tradition of playing host to visiting officers. Before the Rest House was built in the village in 1959, visiting officers always camped in the temple premises if they did not camp near the river. In British India there was no need to conduct the officer through the village, for they seldom went round the village or spoke to the villagers. They confined their attention to official work. Today, the Panchayat Board President is always

waiting to receive visiting officers, but since the officers give interviews freely to the villagers, the President does not actually conduct the officers through the village and introduce them to the villagers. Still the Kshatriyas' contacts with the officers are greater than those of the officials with the other villagers.

The formation of the new Mysore state has brought the people in close contact in various ways with the Kannada-speaking people of the neighbouring districts and especially of the old Mysore state where education and health were supposed to have received Government encouragement. They say that Bellary district, which was in a corner of Madras Presidency, was neglected by the Government, and a border village like Kshetra much more so. The district remained educationally backward. People point to the Kannada officers in the district such as the District Collector, the Assistant Collector and the Tahsildar and say that they are all non-Bellary people.

Although the district is educationally backward, the people have become conscious of the importance of education. Hence they took to the Government's attempt to provide new amenities such as school and hospitals and so forth, and to encourage higher education. Since the district is in the middle of the state with plenty of natural resources such as iron ore and water power from the Tungabhadra which has already been harnessed (by building a dam near Hospet), the district as a whole might receive enough attention from the Government and achieve rapid progress in education.

Contact with the neighbouring areas has also brought about an increase in caste consciousness among people.<sup>1</sup> Contact with the predominantly Lingayat population of Dharwar district and of the former Bombay Karnatak areas, where they form a 'forward' section of the population has aroused a caste consciousness among Lingayats elsewhere. This is evident from a study of the Lingayats of Kshetra. In recent years, communal feeling among the Lingayats of Kshetra has been increasing and consequently the cleavage between the Lingayats and Kshatriyas has been widening. The Lingayats of Kshetra now express the view that since they are numerically pre-ponderant they ought to wield political power. Since they are unable to capture the Presidentship of the Village Panchayat Board and are dominated by

1. Bailey, 1960, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 197-272.

Srinivas, 1957, 'Caste in Modern India' Presidential address, Forty-Fourth Indian Science Congress, Calcutta.



a Kshatriya President, the Lingayats have started emphasizing the ideological difference between the Twice-born and the Veerasaivas. The Lingayats from the neighbouring villages comment upon and laugh at the incapacities of the Kshetra Lingayats, especially in the political sphere.

The Lingayats of Kshetra seem to have always been communal-minded, in that they have always emphasized the religious differences between the Kshatriyas and themselves and have always to take control of the temple. I have shown that the disputes connected with the temple were regional rather than local, so that the Lingayats of Kshetra were under the influence of such surrounding 'Lingayat dominated' areas as Shivapur in Dharwar district. When the temple was the main focus of conflict between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas, it was their economic interests in the temple that led the Lingayats to insist that the temple containing the image of Shiva ought to belong to the Lingayats on religious grounds. They accused the Kshatriyas of having wrongfully removed it from the control of the Jangams.

With the merger of Bellary district with Mysore and the formation of the new Mysore state in 1956, where Lingayats form nearly 20% of the population, and with the emergence of the Lingayats as a politically dominant caste at the state level, there has come about a general Lingayat awakening. This awakening has been given an impetus with the introduction of the Village Panchayat Boards. Elections have given an opportunity to individuals as well as caste-groups to exercise their rights to vote. This is a potent means of seeking their economic and political betterment. The offices of the statutory Panchayat are filled by elected people. Holding an office has a prestige value and it gives some power to the incumbent. Hence people striving for power and prestige naturally seek to be elected to one of the offices in the Panchayat. This is evident from the last ten years history of the Panchayat in Kshetra.

The Lingayats of Kshetra have become politically aware of the advantage of their members, and the power that the community enjoy at the state level.<sup>1</sup> The three Ministers who visited Kshetra

1. Lingayats have emerged as the 'dominant' caste with the formation of the new Mysore state in November, 1956. During the General Elections of 1952, Kshetra was in Madras where the Lingayats constituted a minority. The 1957 General Elections were held almost in the wake of the formation of the new Mysore state. The Lingayats in Bellary district began to feel the political importance of their caste and since then it is on an increase. In 1957, the Lingayats of Kshetra did elect a Lingayat to the Mysore Assembly.



in the last ten years were all Lingayats, and one of them had relatives in Kshetra. The Chief Ministers of the state have been Lingayats, and many civil servants of the state, such as the Assistant Collector in Bellary district, are Lingayats. The Lingayats of Kshetra, in a word, are losing no time in reacting to these favourable external influences. They are grasping the advantages of political power; it is for this reason that they are emphasizing the religious dichotomy between the Kshatriyas and themselves.

### 8. Kshatriya-Official Contacts

Although officials and politicians who visit Kshetra often camp in the village and interview villagers, there is something which prevents the Lingayats from coming into contact with them. It is a fact that contact with officials is still largely a privilege of the Kshatriyas and not of the Lingayats.

Officials who visited Kshetra before the Rest House was constructed in 1959, invariably stayed in the temple premises and were taken care of by the Kshatriyas. Today most officers stay in the Rest House and at times in the temple premises. The Kshatriya President as well as the trustee, feed and attend to them. The Lingayats seldom get any opportunity to entertain even Lingayat officers and politicians at their houses. This is evident from the following instance.

The state Minister for Agriculture and Food, a Lingayat, visited Kshetra during February, 1960. He came in connection with laying the foundation for a bridge across the Tungabhadra. He had visited and stayed with his kinsmen in Kshetra on previous occasions. Everyone in the village speculated that the Minister would camp with his relatives this time too. The Panchayat Board President made elaborate arrangements in the Rest House. The temple trustee postponed his tour to have an interview with the Minister.

As usual, the Minister arrived late for the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone. His party was received by the President near the Rest House and they were taken to the temple to worship the deity and then offered coffee. After this the Minister rushed to the river-side to attend the ceremony. When he came back, it was late evening. The President and the trustee had got up a grand dinner, while the relatives of the Minister were also waiting to take him home for dinner. Caught in this dilemma, the Minister left the village immediately, although he spared a few minutes for a casual talk over a cup of tea with his relatives.

The Tahsildar and the Assistant Collector, who were both Lingayats, camped in the Rest House and the Kshatriya President and the trustee attended on them. In January, 1960, they camped here for three days and made it their temporary headquarters. Instead of paying official visits to the neighbouring villages, they interviewed people from these villages in Kshetra itself.

The Rest House, the lavatory facilities, the availability of electricity, and the direct bus route contributed to their decision to make Kshetra a temporary headquarters. The chief factor which influenced their decision, however, was the generous hospitality of the Kshatriyas. The officers were fed generously on special dishes by the Kshatriyas. Although the officers drew T.A. and D.A. from the Government, the Kshatriyas used to spend money from their own pockets to feed the officers. Indeed, the three day camp of the Assistant Collector, Tahsildar and District Health Officer during January, 1960, drove home to me the fact that the money spent on rich food came from the Kshatriyas.

The officers came in connection with the annual February festival. They were members of the 'Festival Committee'. The Assistant Collector, the Tahsildar, the Executive Officer and the temple trustee discuss and budget the festival expenses. The V.P.B. President is empowered to levy tolls, and issue licences to the shopkeepers who come to the festival. He also undertakes to abide by the health regulations that are laid down by the District Health Officer. The Kshetra Linga temple Festival became a 'notified festival' in 1950, whereby the V.P.B. President succeeded in getting the festival revenue collections for the village Panchayat fund as against the District Board.

It was difficult to make out which officer was deliberating on what topics. Indeed, a single officer like the Tahsildar, had at least three 'roles' combined in him. He was the 'Endowment Board Inspector' for the temple, the 'Deputy Panchayat Officer' for the V.P.B. and 'Revenue Officer' for the traditional Panchayat. So these complex and combined roles of the officers in the temple and in the village administration not only give the Kshatriyas greater opportunity to be in contact with the officers, but strengthen their position. The merger of secular and temple politics allows the President and the trustee to speak for each other. Hence there is no danger of real conflict between the two offices while they are held by persons of the same caste or by two brothers, or by members of a joint family.



Contact with officials is of strategic importance to the Kshatriyas, and is very helpful to them.

The circumstances which deny contacts with officials to the Lingayats are not seriously viewed by them. Although individual officers like the Tahsildar try to evoke caste patriotism, the Lingayats are reluctant and very slow to take advantage of it. In fact the Tahsildar had to pay several visits and had to frequently camp in the village to talk to the local Lingayats, to persuade them to give up an individual plot of land and to make some donations for the proposed school building.

It took more than six months and repeated attempts on the part of the Tahsildar to make the Lingayat magnates agree to the above issues. They were cajoled, but even then tried to evade facing the officer. Individual Lingayats did not see any reason to give donations or relinquish their rights to land for the sake of a school building which does not particularly help their family. On the contrary, they pointed out that there was plenty of land belonging to the Kshetra Linga temple and the Kshatriyas should be made to give up a nearby field. They felt that there was no need to give donations when members of the *Grama Sudharana Sangha*<sup>1</sup> had collected money from the villagers and had misappropriated it. People argued, "Let the members pay the money for the school building."

To some extent the conflict within the village can be said to have created a greater awareness of its identity, its needs, and its position in the wider society. It can even be credited with such specific improvements as the introduction of electricity and local road development. The fact that the Lingayats interpret those improvements initiated by the President as being directed to personal, family, and Kshatriya advantage merely encourages them to intensify their efforts to secure the office for a Lingayat. Consequently the focus of rivalry has shifted from the temple and its land to this office.

As indicated earlier, the creation of the V.P.B. leading to institutionalized leadership by the Kshatriyas has transformed the antagonism between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats. The temple has ceased to evoke interest in the Lingayats. Instead, they are becoming more caste-conscious, and emphasize their numerical

1. *Grama Sudharana Sangha*, a voluntary council for village improvement was formed in 1956. It consists of ten Lingayats and a Kshatriya, and B. Banavi is the President and S.T. Dharmakarta, Vice-President. The Council has not been dissolved, but it is defunct.



strength and other assets which, they think, give them political dominance and hence must one day ensure that a Lingayat replaces the Kshatriya President. The status and privileges which fellow-Lingayats enjoy outside the district has awakened communal pride and ambition. Still, in their attempt to capture the seat of village political leadership, the Lingayats are not yet united.

Internal structural differences and individual idiosyncracies are a stumbling block to the attainment of their goal. Lingayat Government officials and visiting politicians have not yet evoked a response among the Lingayats although the possibilities for it are greater in the near future. At the moment, they are slow to make approaches to official sources to get what they want. They are not ambivalent towards Government officers and politicians. They know that what they want to achieve takes time, and it is essentially a slow process. Nevertheless, they firmly believe that one day they will be able to capture the Presidency of the Village Panchayat Board and keep it.

The V.P.B. has an annual income of Rs. 10,000 of which nearly Rs. 6,000 comes from the temple. The festival dues in connection with major festivals in the temple (the temple became a 'notified' one in 1953 when the V.P.B. secured the right to collect revenue), such as levy on shopkeepers, ground rent, tolls, licence fee, entertainment fee, and manure, are collected by the V.P.B. The remaining amount comes from house taxes, vehicle taxes, ferry service on the Tungabhadra and so forth.

The annual expenditure incurred by the V.P.B. amounts to Rs. 8,000 ; so there is a clear saving of Rs. 2,000 per annum. This is further substantiated by the figures of net savings given by the President for the decade 1950-60. The Panchayat has saved as much as Rs. 20,000 excluding the expenditure met by it in connection with road repair, building a Rest House and so forth. The President rightly felt that Kshetra provided a rare example of monetary savings and general improvement in a village. The neighbouring village, Kolalu, which is a pretty large village, did not have the facilities which Kshetra had and according to the President its savings also are nil.

Since the major portion of the V.P.B. income is derived from the temple, it is natural that the temple is the focus of interest of the V.P.B. As indicated earlier, the President and the Trustee, brothers from a joint family, have developed identical interests although they hold different offices.

The merger of the temple economy with the resources of the statutory Panchayat acts as an incentive for the merger of temple and secular politics. In both the temple and the village the brunt of the economic burden falls on the Lingayats as they are shopkeepers and substantial peasants. This they naturally resent.

Since the V.P.B. administration and its revenue includes part of the temple income also, in the opinion of the Lingayats the V.P.B. has subsumed the temple. If the Lingayats succeed in becoming Presidents of the V.P.B. then they will also have some control over temple funds. Thus the V.P.B. and the Presidentship have in recent years, become the focal points of interest. Hence Lingayat hostility to the Kshatriya President is on the increase.

In the concluding chapter I shall summarise how the interplay of local and external forces has been continuous so that Kshetra was never insulated against the greater part of the Deccan. These external influences sometimes have helped to conserve traditional social values ; at other times changes have been ushered in. The Kshatriyas have been able to dominate over the newly emergent forces largely on account of the stranglehold of tradition in the lives of the villagers. The Lingayats posed a challenge and forced changes but the structure included these by expanding itself.

Both Lingayats as well as Kshatriyas have tried to justify their roles largely on the basis of traditional values and relationships. The existing subsistence agrarian economy can promote only "organic solidarity" based on differential status among caste-groups. Rational relationships based on social equality cannot take roots in the face of economic inter-dependence.

The introduction of democratic institutions divorced from religious forces and endorsing equality of status are an anathema viewed against the background of the caste hierarchy and traditional values. The struggle between old and new values continues. Which one of them will triumph depends ultimately on factors which affect the destiny of the nation. The forces of tradition have so far held sway. The changes underway can become equally 'reactionary' in nature. It certainly takes much longer for egalitarian principles to take root in India. This requires the replacement of the economic structure which will in turn influence political relationships. Education, industrialization, and urbanization can over a span of years reduce the hold of rigid traditions and foster new secular values.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TRADITION AND CHANGE IN POLITICS AND RELIGION

FROM the foregoing chapters the extent to which politics and religion have been interacting in Kshetra and the Deccan area can be gathered. In Karnataka, traditional religious forces were challenged by the growth and spread of Veerasaivism. Brahmanical Hinduism had to accept the new faith in its fold, although it was anti-Brahmanical. Veerasaivism thus questioned the authority of Brahmanical Hinduism and ushered in changes. The religious changes also brought about a change in the power-relationship. In the struggle between the traditional and the emergent values, the latter succumbed to the former, that in course of time the traditional system continued to dominate the socio-religious sphere in spite of changes in other spheres of activity.

Kshetra can also be studied as an isolable unit. It has its own form and institutions which could be distinguished from others. The Kshetra Linga temple, its cult, the traditional Panchayat, the Kshatriya dominance and the Lingayat preponderance are some of the important local factors. Kshetra is a typical in many respects. The social organization, and interpersonal and intercaste relationships in terms of social distance, are much more relaxed here. It compares favourably with other villages studied by social anthropologists so far.

Twin processes may be said to have been working in the direction of liberalism. Firstly, the preponderance of Lingayats, whose



philosophy and practice do not adhere to the intense observance of ritual purity and pollution like Brahmanical Hinduism, has undoubtedly eased the situation to a large extent. Secondly, the Kshetra Linga temple as a regional cult centre with a network of ritual ties particularly centred on agricultural rites has, in effect, brought together diverse people in search of a common goal.

But the village seldom functioned as an independent unit. Throughout the known history of the village, Kshetra has had continuous contact with the surrounding area. The impact of outside forces has brought about many changes in the village.

The founding of the Kshetra Linga temple, explained partly in mythical and partly in historical terms does not coincide in time with the founding of the village. But it explains the subsequent expansion of the village effectively. The village must have existed during 11-12th centuries, from the time of the Western Chalukyas. The Kalleswara temple in Kshetra was perhaps built during this period. Chalukyan art and architecture is famous in Bellary district. The Mallikarjuna temple at Guruvathi is certainly magnificent.

By the middle of 12th century the Chalukyas were overthrown by Bijjala of the Kalachurya dynasty. It was during this period that Basava, Chief Minister and Treasurer under Bijjala, a Saiva Brahmin by birth, expounded the Veerasaiva tenets, preached in the vernacular, and converted large numbers of people to the new faith. Veerasaivism was opposed to Brahmanical Hinduism from the beginning. Bijapur, Raichur, Dharwar and Bellary districts came under the direct influence of Veerasaiva preachers. The preponderance of Veerasaivas in Kshetra is probably due to this, although there are other historical factors as will be elaborated below.

The Kshetra Linga temple from the very beginning seems to have flourished on the basis of voluntary contributions and gifts. The Kshatriyas are in possession of several gift deeds made by feudal rulers and rich landlords throughout the 18th century. This possibly suggests that the cult was fairly widespread even during the early 18th century. There is also a reference to gifts made by one Bharammanna Naik of Medakere in Chitradurga district around 1748.

The gift deed by Sadar Sahib in 1788 seems to have been providential and brought about the expansion of the village. In the introductory chapter and in the chapter on the temple cult I have indicated that the merger of the four hamlets with Kshetra was

explained by local informants. Otherwise, to begin with, Kshetra was a fortified village with a handful of people living within the temple premises. The village began to expand beyond the temple compound as a result of people moving into Kshetra from the nearby hamlets.

The political insecurity of the Deccan villages dates back to the early Muslim invasions from the North around 1310. All the feudal rulers, both Muslims and Hindus, including the rulers of Vijayanagar and the Maratta ruler Shivaji, have overrun the Deccan area and left their impact. It was with the arrival of the British in 1800 that political consolidation of the area began. The stable administration of the British also gave a sense of security to the people. As the British got a foot-hold in Bellary district, they surveyed the land and introduced the ryotwari system of land tenure, as a measure to increase the resources of the Government to provide stable administration.

The Kshetra Linga temple's inam land was registered in the names of service-holders in 1861. From now on private or individual ownership of land gave the cultivators the right to own land in contrast to the inam system and to pay taxes directly to the Government.

While the merger of the surrounding four hamlets—Malapura, Ramapura, Mallapura and Somalapura—with Kshetra had resulted in the expansion of the village, it also brought people professing a new faith which contrasted with Brahmanical Hinduism. The large number of Lingayats who moved into Kshetra used to pay taxes, according to the gift deed, to the Kshatriya tax-collectors. With the introduction of ryotwari land tenure system, the Lingayat cultivators took to paying taxes directly to the Government and owning the land personally.

In the words of a senior Kshatriya informant "the 1788 gift deed reduced the Kshatriyas into a subordinate position ; before this the Kshatriyas were ruling over the four hamlets and controlled the surrounding area". The introduction of the ryotwari system of land-holding further reduced the power of the Kshatriyas. The seeds of dispute between the Kshatriyas and the numerically preponderant Lingayats were sown during the 19th century. Gradually their secular powers were reduced and their rights shrunk to ownership of the temple.

This was a welcome opportunity for the numerically large Lingayat community to strengthen their economic position through



land-holding and to further diversify their economic activities in business and temple services. Towards the end of the 19th century the Lingayats openly voiced their opposition to the Kshatriyas and alleged that the Kshatriyas had misappropriated temple funds and jewellery. Lingayats wanted to have a hold on the temple. The Lingayat-Kshatriya disputes brought in the Government as an adjudicator. Step by step the Government went on limiting but legitimizing the rights of the Kshatriyas to ownership of the temple.

The series of court litigations between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas gave both equal opportunity to ramifying their contacts. While the Lingayats usually associated with Lingayats from other places, the Kshatriyas depended on a variety of people coming from different places and of different castes. This brought the village under a variety of influences. These influences further sharpened the already existing divergencies between the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas.

The allegations and counter allegations made by the Lingayats and the Kshatriyas in connection with temple proprietorship show the extent to which the antagonism was sharpened by emphasizing orthodox or reformist values. The temple rituals emphasize and uphold Brahmanical traditions and values. On the basis of this, the Kshatriyas charged that a true Lingayat should not worship anything other than his personal lingam, worn on his body. They declared that Lingayats would not have access to the innermost shrine.

The Lingayats though anti-Brahmanical and anti-Sanskritic and described as heterodox equally invoked the authority of the Vedas to challenge Kshatriya claims. Accordingly it was pointed out that Kshatriyas, unlike Brahmins and Veerasaivas cannot be priests and gurus. Since the deity in the temple is one of the several incarnations of Shiva, and Lingayats are worshippers exclusively of Shiva, they laid claims to the Saivite temple. They even declared Kshetra to be a place of pilgrimage for Lingayats.

Both the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats made use of religious arguments against one another, but in support of their own secular interests. To continue to associate themselves (i.e. the Kshatriyas) with the temple cult was not merely to serve the religious purposes or ritual needs of the Kshatriyas. In fact temple ownership and presiding over the several rituals is a matter of making a living. As already pointed out, the Kshatriyas do not do any manual work, but tour among the followers of the cult and collect enough money to maintain their families in comfort. Even the 'sword-bearers' land



owned by the Kshatriyas is cultivated by Lingayat tenants. The secular and sacred interests and activities of the Kshatriyas are inextricably intertwined. If the temple should change hands for some reasons, as things stand, it will be very difficult for the Kshatriyas to make a living.

The Lingayats on the other hand are heterodox. Ritual purity and pollution is not central to Veerasaivism. The religious precepts and practices are more secularised as can be seen from their occupational diversity and domestic ritualism. Yet the Lingayats also advanced religious reasons for claiming the Kshetra Linga temple as a Veerasaiva religious centre. It was, however, not their love of religion or their religious devotion to the deity in the temple that led them to fight the Kshatriyas. Had it not been for the temple's property and other resources, the Lingayats would hardly have took notice of the presence of the temple. It was precisely the economic resources of the temple that prompted the Lingayats to move against the Kshatriyas. Had they succeeded in the litigations and dislodged the Kshatriyas, the secular position of the Lingayats would have been strengthened.

The initial differences between the orthodox and reformist values converged with the passage of time and events and neither the Kshatriyas nor the Lingayats could really soar above the limits of tradition. The aspirations of the Lingayat cultivators to bring about changes in the traditional agricultural economy is hampered by the inalienable nature of the temple lands. While optimum exploitation of the temple lands cannot be achieved, very little land comes into market. Temple lands created a shortage of available land in the village for aspiring Lingayat cultivators.<sup>1</sup> This naturally frustrated them.

Given the social structure as it exists and functions in Kshetra and the agricultural economy that binds people, a change in temple proprietorship would have hardly brought in structural changes. In fact it would have further strengthened the Lingayat position and the agricultural economy. Since the agricultural economy survives on 'organic solidarity' between agricultural patrons and servicing castes, very little of the impact of the temple would have been visible. It would have become a Lingayat religious centre, thus limiting its present comprehensive nature.

1. See 'Landholding Pattern and Power Relations in a Mysore Village' 1968, Vol. 17, No. 2..

As secular aims are sought to be attained by emphasizing different religious values, there would have been no change in the structure of authority. Although the Lingayats are more secular in outlook, even they are functioning within the traditional structure. In the Lingayat—non-Lingayat relationships as well as among different Lingayat sub-castes, ritual superiority is implicit. However, it is not always the ritual superiority that enables one caste to assert itself against the other. The caste-groups that are economically dominant are the most powerful ones provided they are above the 'pollution-barrier'. Only in the case of Untouchables is the ritual status not commensurate with economic and political authority. In the case of caste Hindus the three variables buttress one another. Thus it is difficult to demarcate sacred from secular authority and interests.

If the Lingayats were not preponderant in number and had not claimed equality with the Twice-born, if landed wealth had not been concentrated in their hands in Kshetra, they would not have aspired to acquire the 'third dimension', namely, political authority to be able to enjoy overall dominance in the village. Even among the Lingayats, the Panchachara sub-caste enjoys ritual superiority. It is they who have been and still are fighting unceasingly against the Kshatriyas.

Landholding, business, and general concentration of wealth in the hands of the Veerasaivas of Kshetra make them easily the richest community in the village. Most Government posts are held by them and an educated group is about to emerge. Their contact with neighbouring areas which constitutes one administrative unit in the 'new' Mysore, is encouraging the growth of political and caste consciousness in them. The linguistic and cultural barriers which presumably hampered them hitherto are now removed. Political barriers, separating them as members of different administrative units, are also things of the past. Administrators at the state level are no longer 'aliens' and the fact that the Lingayats dominate at the state level, provides some familiar basis—caste affiliation—for the Kshetra Lingayats to identify themselves with the leaders.

The only drawback that the Lingayats of Kshetra suffer from is their lack of contacts with officials. Given time, contacts with officials can be established with the emergence of educated Lingayats and Veerasaiva officials within the district and outside it. But the fundamental question why the Lingayats have not so far united to vote one of their members into the Presidency still remains. Will

they ever be united against the Kshatriyas and will they be able to produce a political leader to replace the Kshatriya President? Such questions are for them of the highest importance.

The relationships among the Lingayat sub-castes and within a major sub-caste like the Panchacharas, have till now been marked by competition and disunity. At no time in the history of their struggle against the Kshatriyas have the Veerasaivas of Kshetra presented a unified front. This lack of unity expresses itself in several ways. Various reasons could be given in support of this.

The numerical strength of the community is a primary factor. Weakness of religious authority leaves the members free to do what they want to. There is no strong central authority which commands sufficient influence to wield them together. The endogamy of sub-castes and the occasional differences that have existed for a long time, have contributed to the retention of the internal structure differentiation and towards the lack of unity.<sup>1</sup> Length of residence, wealth, landed property, influence and kinship ties till now have not united the Lingayats.<sup>2</sup> To complete the picture, individual idiosyncracies have always played a major part in keeping the Lingayats divided.<sup>3</sup>

The above characteristics are inherent in the structure and are very important to the political situation. There are other factors which are external to the structure. They are the lack of leadership, official contacts, political awareness and wider contacts in general. All these seem to suggest that a time-interval is necessary before the Veerasaivas can assume village political leadership in Kshetra.

The Lingayats, in addition to the above obstacles, have still to counter the influence of the temple. The temple regulates secular political behaviour among the people by appealing to their religious susceptibilities. There again, it is not the Kshatriya President, but the Lingayat leaders of his party who canvassed in the name of the deity, and it is they who extorted oaths from the Madigas to vote for them. Since the trusteeship of the Kshatriyas is well established, the Lingayats have no means of putting forward claims to the control of the temple itself. In order to succeed to secular political office in the village, the influence of the temple must be weakened. There are several ways of bringing this about.

1. See Chapter IV, particularly history of the sect.

2. See Chapters VI-VII, especially lawsuits, B. Kadale.

3. The 1960 Election Drama, Chapter VII, B. Banavi.



The anti-Kshatriya Lingayat party may make use of the temple during the elections to win the religious support of the local people. They may take the opposite course of giving publicity to the fact that women votaries of the temple are Basavis. They may also disclose that the Kshatriyas are encouraging the maintenance of caste distinctions by administering to the caste customs and traditions of cult followers who are organized into a 'religious order' (*Gudikattu*) outside Kshetra.

The Government has passed Acts both against the institution of Basavis and against the caste system. Political leadership in the state has been in the hands of Veerasaivas since the formation of the new Mysore state. However, the Government might interest itself in following the Kshatriyas to investigate the truth of anti-Kshatriya propaganda. Democratic legislation, and the emergence of a literate class in the village and in the wider area, coupled with anti-Kshatriya propaganda, may result in a further diminution of the Kshatriya political and juridical influence outside Kshetra among the followers of the cult, which will also reduce their economic resources.

Other possibilities resulting in the emergence of Lingayat leaders are directly connected with the Kshatriyas. The smallness of the Kshatriya community does not ensure a continuous supply of able political leaders. Furthermore 'traditional' political leadership may not survive the impact of new conditions. The younger generation of Kshatriyas have fewer chances of gaining political experience. No one among the Kshatriya youths at the moment shows any interest in political power or displays qualities of leadership.

The highly formalised conduct of the Kshatriyas in the matter of relations between the sexes and among men themselves has resulted in keeping the youths ignorant of the past and completely dependent on their elders for a living. Under changing circumstances, this is a weakness which could be detrimental to the solidarity of the Kshatriya community. I did not see elder Kshatriya men talking to members of the younger generation, except when they ordered them to do some work for them. Under these circumstances youths cannot take the initiative and develop qualities of leadership. The absence of leadership qualities in the younger generation will leave a gap in the sense that they cannot assume leadership when it becomes necessary. Development of leadership qualities in the younger generation in itself does not constitute a threat to the

Kshatriya elderly leaders because it ensures the continuity of their caste tradition.

Formal schooling which is becoming highly important, is sadly lacking among the Kshatriyas. The 'sword-bearers' land is the only property belonging to the Kshatriyas in the village, and tours among cult followers and collection of fees from them is an important source of income.

A high degree of solidarity, in contrast with Lingayat disunity, has until now helped the Kshatriyas to resist Lingayat claims to political leadership. But there is no certainty that they will do so in future. One member of the Kshatriya family is living in a portion of a Lingayat house. The man who has provided accommodation to the Kshatriya, of course, stands by the Lingayat party. Such obligations might come to interfere with the solidarity of the Kshatriya community. Again the head of another Kshatriya family openly supported the Lingayat party in the 1960 elections.

Nuclear families among the Kshatriyas emerged automatically in the 1930's, when they lost the joint family building to their Lingayat creditor. The partition of the joint family has strengthened the independent outlook of individual families. Thus when they come together for some family ceremonies, such as a wedding or a first haircut, they exhibit a certain degree of disunity by gossiping maliciously after the ceremony about other families.

One of the younger sons of the trustee challenged a member of the senior line and told him that they have nothing to do with the temple. He meant by this that the trusteeship, according to the established rule, descends in the second line based on primogeniture. The descendants of the polygynous marriages of the trustee may well find themselves at loggerheads. Above all, the large family of the President, with his six sons, is difficult to maintain under one roof. All these factors might contribute to bringing about a change in the village political leadership. But that change has not yet been made.

Members of the younger generation of Kshatriyas, as they have not developed any taste for political leadership, may become friends with Lingayats and let the political leadership pass to them. Under these conditions the Kshatriyas may be left with the management of the temple and the cult may not suffer any diminution.

The Kshatriya-Lingayat relationship today is in fact not wholly antagonistic, although the antagonism is increasing. I have pointed

out the Kshatriya dependence on local servicing castes. For their grocery and milk the Kshatriyas are dependent on Lingayats. In the working of the temple and the cultivation of the Kshatriya share of temple land also, the Kshatriyas are dependent on the Lingayats. The temple lands are mostly leased to Lingayats. The rights of collecting tolls, ground rent and manure for the 1960 February Festival were auctioned by the President of the Panchayat Board. The successful bidders came from the Lingayat party.

A Lingayat schoolmaster, sitting in a local hostel, abused and mishandled a Kshatriya youth, alleging that he had given the ethnographer information about the teacher's cruelty to students. The proprietor of the hostel, one of the leaders of the Lingayat party, thrashed the teacher. Later on he said to me, "poor X—the Kshatriya youth—is a feeble fellow and an innocent man." In this situation it could be argued that Lingayat-Kshatriya antagonism and caste distinctions were overlooked in terms of the identification of fellow-villagers. The Lingayat schoolmaster came from the neighbouring village and had a reputation for being rude and unruly. The bonds of caste did not prevent the proprietor from thrashing the schoolmaster.

The sense of unity, solidarity and fellow-feeling as members of the same village community expresses itself under compelling external circumstances. Within the village, the relationship in day-to-day living is characterized as much by cooperation as by stresses and strains among different caste-groups. But the Panchachara Lingayat-Kshatriya relationships are marked by tension and overt antagonism as they compete with one another to dominate the village.

The large number of disputes between the Kshatriyas and the Lingayats has already led to a diminution of the Kshatriya ritual and political authority in the traditional sense. Today Kshatriyas have given up or changed the venue of some important ritual observances in the temple. They are increasingly withdrawing from the village to the temple compound. But from the temple compound itself the Kshatriyas are able to capture and head the secular democratic Panchayat Board.

The outcome of this long drawn out Kshatriya-Lingayat tension and struggle for power has been favourable to the village in a way, although the Lingayats rationalize and say that the wealth of the village was drained on account of this. Many improvements have



been effected—the post office, roads, electricity, the Rest House and the school building—in the village in the last 20 years. The physical appearance of the village has and is changing. But the social relationships continue to exist in the traditional manner. The physical changes have not transformed the social values and distinctions. There appears to be a constant struggle between the old and the new.

The immediate effect of education among the Lingayats is that it has made them conscious of their dominant position. Hence they compare the local situation with the state of affairs in neighbouring places where Lingayats dominate. The status enjoyed by Lingayats at the state level is influencing and awakening the Lingayats of Kshetra. They are gradually building up contacts through 'middle men' in election situations. All this is for capturing the Village Panchayat Board Presidentship, which according to Lingayat informants symbolises the exercise of political authority and dominance.

Urban values are not yet visible, except in outward appearances. Going to coffeeshops, smoking cigarettes, being smartly dressed, or even using and displaying chinawares has not brought about a change in values or in the ethos of ritual life. The villagers' contacts with towns are very infrequent, and are mostly for selling the agricultural surplus or for buying clothes and other necessities. The nearest town, Ranebennur, is 15 miles from Kshetra but travelling there involves the hurdle of crossing the Tungabhadra river which generally sets the limit for travelling. The increased bus services to Kshetra have helped easy transportation and communication. But apart from the Kshatriyas only a handful of villagers benefit from these. Till now, owing to a variety of reasons, it is mostly the Kshatriyas who have been benefited. But these advantages enjoyed are not matched by a high degree of formal education.

The impact of democratic institutions in fact has strengthened traditional authority.<sup>1</sup> The 1960 Village Panchayat Board elections and the history of the Panchayat between 1950 and 1960 strengthens this. Only the upper castes squabble and bargain for more power. The lower caste and those who constitute a numerical minority are subordinated to the higher and the more influential dominant groups. Most of the village women have no idea of political activities. The Untouchable and women members of the Panchayat are mere "yes men" who could be used as pawns to increase the bargaining power of members of the dominant castes.

1. See "Election and Traditional Leadership in a Mysore Village" I and II, 1964.

Political democracy with its overwhelming secular and egalitarian notions is a contradiction to the facts of daily life. The caste hierarchy based on graded inequality, and the superordination—subordination role relationships, fixes the position of members of different castes. Caste-group endogamy, rules of dietetics and regulated inter-caste commensality are the predominant features of rural India. Democratic principles have not yet touched the traditional values that are fostered by caste, and economic and political institutions which require the subordination of the lower castes to the upper castes. The utter economic dependence of the lower castes on the upper castes and the social distance they need to maintain discourages them from claiming equality of status with the upper castes in other secular situations.

In some circumstances inter-caste relationships appear to have been liberalised, particularly in the case of a low caste officer and a caste Hindu. The caste Hindu villagers grudgingly acknowledge or appreciate the officer. But the same officer involved in a secular situation will be forced to behave and act deferentially. For instance, the visit to Kshetra of the District and Sessions Judge, an Untouchable Maḍiga, during 1957-58, illustrates this. He was accorded a grand welcome and offered an expensive cardamom garland and taken inside the temple for worship. But when they sat for the dinner which was specially prepared in his honour, all caste Hindu invitees sat on an elevated place in a row in the 'homada mane' (sacrificial house) while the Judge himself sat below and alone. The trustee told me, "In spite of his status as a Judge, he could not bring himself to sit along with us. He behaved appropriately on the occasion and we all admire him for the same."

A change in the economy and altered economic relationships still cannot bring about social equality. The Panchayati Raj institutions have created a thirst for political power especially among the 'middle-range' caste groups. The right to vote and contest elections has made people conscious of their ability to manoeuvre among the lower castes to win the elections. A lot of caste and communal appeals are made and such affinity is exploited. No Untouchable, however educated and qualified, can aspire to become the President of the Village Panchayat. All the changes that have taken place so far suggest the strengthening of either the traditionally higher castes or the emerging dominant middle-range caste groups only. Under the



circumstances it is unrealistic to visualise an egalitarian structure replacing the graded hierarchy.

The Kshatriyas have a tradition of political dominance. At one time they came to Kshetra from outside. Kshatriyas trace their origin to the now extinct Vijayanagar royal family. After settling in Kshetra, they were able to build a 'religious empire' around the Kshetra Linga temple cult. The outward spread of the temple cult has supported and sustained the Kshatriya position locally, and it points to their foresight and political shrewdness.

The economic and political loss suffered by the Kshatriyas locally at the hands of the Lingayat opposition continually brought them in contact with officials on the one hand and followers of the cult on the other. The votaries of the cult obeyed the Kshatriyas and paid them ceremonial fees. The Kshatriya-votary relationship essentially is one of superordination and subordination. It has acquired an enduring nature and is very important to the Kshatriyas. In recent years the Kshatriyas have also tended to withdraw from groups claiming equality or from those who challenge their authority. This is precisely what the Lingayat-Kshatriya relationship is today.

As already pointed out the Kshatriyas cannot continue to play the same leading roles that they have played till recently. One of the reasons for this is partly connected with the Kshatriya community itself. The other is the increasing overt antagonism of the Lingayats and the impact of external forces. As Lingayats dominate state politics, the political office at the village level may also change hands sooner or later. But the extent to which the Lingayats can be organized to keep it for themselves is also open to speculation.

The Lingayats have not displayed any unity even while fighting the Kshatriyas or for the benefit of the caste-group. In fact some of them are staunch supporters of Kshatriyas. It seems that the Kshatriyas alone can provide 'compromise' candidates if deadlocks arise between Lingayat factions.

The importance of the temple and its rituals lies in its agricultural rites. This has enabled the Kshatriyas to continue to enjoy dominance. The cult cuts across caste, occupational, cultural, linguistic and political barriers. A sense of unity of purpose is forged between the followers of the cult and the Kshatriyas. Hence sectarian attempts to take control of the temple and direct its rituals have failed. To this extent, through the temple cult, the Kshatriyas enjoy the confidence and support of agriculturists and others.



As long as beliefs and practices in the agricultural economy are centered around the benevolence of supernatural powers, the Kshatriya status and prestige will remain intact at least among their cult followers. This is not surprising in the light of the fact that every item of Western technology and science is construed in terms of Indian cultural idioms. Farm machines cease to be merely machines but are ritually adored on many occasions.

Unlike the Kshatriyas, the Lingayats of Kshetra do not have a tradition of political leadership. They are not united even in this pursuit. Competition, jealousy and desire to secure personal interests mark the Lingayat community. In fact this has helped the Kshatriyas to maintain a hold in the past. It is likely that given sufficient time, the political climate in the state will fan the increasing communal feeling among the Lingayats of Kshetra, and if certain conditions I have outlined earlier continue unchanged among the Kshatriyas, the traditional mode of Kshatriya authority may succumb to new forces.

Religious differences among castes are best expressed when the castes in question challenge each other's superiority and compete for power. Competition for power again finds expression in the political and economic arenas. The economic and political motivations accentuate religious differences and the contending parties emphasize the religious dichotomy in order to further economic and political ends. The Veerasaivas of Kshetra provide a striking example of this tendency for they have constantly invoked the religious cleavage between themselves and the Kshatriyas to further their own secular interests.

To put it in another way, sectarian movements within Hinduism are not merely religious movements. In their attempt to repudiate traditional Hinduism, sectarians often broke off from the parental stock by declining to submit to the juridical authority of the latter. They frequently expounded a 'new philosophy' of 'economic life' to be able to assert their independence.

Veerasaivism broke off from Brahmanical Hinduism, refused to accept the supremacy of the Brahmins and expounded a new theory of 'work', i.e. "find your heaven in your work (*kayakave Kailasa*)". Religious differences are not infrequently stressed to secure secular interests. This is as much true of the Veerasaivas of Kshetra as of any other religious group in other societies. The inter-caste relationship in the village, the tradition of the Kshatriyas, and the aspirations

of the Lingayats cannot be studied in isolation from the role of the greater powers. Democratic institutions have forged increased solidarity among members of particular caste groups. In a bid for political power new alignments are made. Inter-caste political relationships alter or keep changing accordingly. In spite of continued Lingayat-Kshatriya conflict, developmental works are under way. Changes are mostly in the sphere of secular activities. These changing secular activities have not been able to effect changes in traditional ritual or political relationships. Recent political ideas have both changed and conserved the traditions. Political awareness and participation has necessitated adaptation to changed situations. The role of caste and caste identity by the same token has increased considerably in recent years. Like other Indian villages Kshetra is caught between traditional and changing socio-religious forces and recent political innovations.

## GLOSSARY

(Kannada to English)

Agase—Village gate.

Arti—Sacred lamp.

Basavi—Custom of dedicating girls to a deity.

Beedi—Country made leaf cigarette.

Bhandar—Consecrated turmeric powder.

Bilwa—Cassia fistula.

Dakshine—Ceremonial fee.

Devadasi—Institution of dedicating girls to a deity.

Dhal—Split peas.

Diksha—Initiation, purification, anointment, and so on.

Gaddige—Ceremonial seat.

Ghi—Clarified butter.

Gorava—Ritual name of a class of votaries in the Kshetra Linga temple.

Gudikattu—Religious order of the followers of the Kshetra Linga cult.

Guru—Spiritual teacher.

Holige—Sweet dish made from split peas.

Inam (land)—Gift (land).

Iyyachara—Initiation ceremony for Jangams.

Jaggery—Country made crude brown sugar.

Jolige—Begging bowl.

Jowar—Sorghum.

Kacheha—Food prepared with water.

Kalasa—Sacred lamp.

Kankana—Betel leaf roll tied with cotton thread dyed yellow in turmeric solution and worn on the right wrist of persons playing ceremonial roles especially during a wedding.

Kante—A kind of paste used in coating the personal lingam.

Karnika—Foretelling.

Karunaprasada—Ceremonial coconut water.

Kattaya—Payment in kind for supply of leather goods.

Linga (m)—The divine symbol of Shiva (also worn on the body of a Veerasaiva).

Lingadharana—Ceremonial tying on of Linga (m.)



Malige—Country house.

Mutt—Religious organization.

Padapuja—Worship of feet.

Padodaka—Water consecrated by washing the feet.

Pakka—Food prepared with ghee.

Patta (land)—Certificate of ownership of land.

Pavada—Miracle.

Prasada—Consecrated food.

Pujari—Temple priest.

Purohit—Domestic priest.

Rotti—Dry pancake made from jowar flour.

Sanyasi—Ascetic.

Tirtha—Mixture of sacred ash and consecrated water.

Tali—Marriage pendant (badge).

Vibhuti—Sacred ash.

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